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JESUS CHRIST

Anthony C. Deane

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JESUS CHRIST

BY

ANTHONY C. DEANE, M.A.

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FIRST EDITION

PREFACE

I WANT to make clear, if I can, the special scope and aim of this book.

It is not, in the usual sense, a "Life of Christ"—a work, that is, which re-tells the whole story of the Gospels, weaving the narratives of the four Evangelists into one, describing every incident, re-interpreting each parable. Of such books some new and valuable examples have been published within recent years, and I have not tried to compete with them.

Yet their copiousness sometimes discomfits readers who turn to them with a special need; people (and my work brings me into touch with many of them) who feel themselves confronted afresh by that enduring question, "Whom say ye that I am?" And there are others, who having answered,

would like to be more sure that the answer they gave was justified. They find that the "Lives of Christ" are largely taken up with historical and geographical detail, with picturesque descriptions of buildings and scenery, with erudite doctrinal or critical discussions, even with the writer's own moralizings—with, in short, subsidiary matter which, though of much interest in itself, does not help those whose need is like that of the Greeks in Jerusalem:—"Sir, we would see Jesus." It may be said that such people must be referred to the Gospels. That is obviously true. Yet the Gospels themselves presuppose for their right understanding certain knowledge which their first readers had, which modern study has recaptured, but which as yet is not often in the possession of the general reader.

What, then, I have tried—how imperfectly!—to do, is not to supply an answer to our Lord's supreme question, but to place before the reader the material on which an answer can be based. His it must

be; each of us must frame his own reply. Yet a concise statement of the evidence may help him in framing it. If we are rightly to appraise the claims of Jesus, we must know something of the age and its religious thought in which his work was done. We must see how he appeared to his contemporaries, how he conceived his mission, by what means he set himself to fulfil it. We must see not only how he lived, but how he died, and triumphed over death.

That is the kind of evidence I have attempted to place clearly before the reader. In such an attempt it is essential not to obscure the main facts by a mass of detail. Necessarily, therefore, I have omitted much that is recorded in the Gospels, the better to concentrate on the chief characteristics of our Lord's ministry and the great turning-points in his earthly life. To the fact that the book is written with this special aim, and to its limitations of space, I hope the reader will ascribe omissions that else might seem unpardonable.

A word should be added about two small details. I have followed the usage of the English Bible—both in the Authorized and Revised Versions—by not employing capital letters for pronouns referring to our Lord. Otherwise, in a book wholly about him, each page is overloaded with capitals, and takes on an unreal, artificial look, which somewhat repels the reader. After all, the designers of our English Bible are an authority good enough to follow.

Also it will be observed that, generally speaking, I have described our Lord by his human name. To do otherwise would seem to prejudge the issue on which, as I have insisted, each of us must form his own decision. "Jesus" implies a question: "Christ" supplies the answer. It is the one adequate answer. But I want the reader to reach that conclusion for himself.

Let my last personal word be one of profound thankfulness to God for all that the writing of this little book, despite its

faults, has taught me. . . . There shall be no "I" within the book itself! Its aim will be fulfilled indeed if it can help forward any reader until, book and writer alike forgotten, he stands face to face with Jesus Christ.

A. C. D.

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Of all human ambitions an open mind eagerly expectant of new discoveries and ready to remold convictions in the light of added knowledge and dispelled ignorances and misapprehensions, is the noblest, the rarest and the most difficult to achieve.

JAMES HARVEY ROBINSON, in
"The Humanizing of Knowledge."

IT IS the purpose of DORAN'S MODERN READERS' BOOKSHELF to bring together in brief, stimulating form a group of books that will be fresh appraisals of many things that interest modern men and women. Much of History, Literature, Biography and Science is of intense fascination for readers to-day and is lost to them by reason of being surrounded by a forbidding and meticulous scholarship.

These books are designed to be simple, short, authoritative, and such as would arouse the interest of intelligent readers. As nearly as possible they will be intended, in

Professor Robinson's words quoted above, "to remold convictions in the light of added knowledge."

This "adding of knowledge" and a widespread eagerness for it are two of the chief characteristics of our time. Never before, probably, has there been so great a desire to know, or so many exciting discoveries of truth of one sort or another. Knowledge and the quest for it has now about it the glamour of an adventure. To the quickening of this spirit in our day DORAN'S MODERN READERS' BOOKSHELF hopes to contribute.

In addition to the volumes announced here others are in preparation for early publication. The Editors will welcome suggestions for the BOOKSHELF and will be glad to consider any manuscripts suitable for inclusion.

THE EDITORS.

CHAPTER I

THE PROLOGUE

I

In the year 26 A.D. southern Palestine, an outlying part of the Roman Empire, was stirred as it had not been for upwards of four centuries. True, in that long period its inhabitants had undergone many vicissitudes. The ancient race of Israel had passed in turn under the sway of many rulers. Rome was the latest of them, but Rome itself could not enforce tranquillity upon a people who claimed to be the elect of God and exempt from all earthly dominion. Of tumults and disturbances there had been many. They had been particularly frequent within the last thirty years—years during which the son of a woman of Nazareth had grown to manhood. National feeling had compelled changes in

the system of local government administered from Rome. Political intrigues had been planned and put down. Religious fanatics had tried, with varying degrees of brief success, to stir revolt. At length had come an interlude of outward calm. But it was the calm of embittered despair rather than of acquiescence. Any moment might bring news of some fresh local insurrection. Such news had become almost commonplace. It would cause little hope in Jerusalem, and little harm at Rome.

The news that came, however, was vastly more significant and unexpected. It was news of a religious revival. It was news without parallel for centuries. It agitated, though in very different fashions, priests in the Temple and peasants in the villages. It was the theme of eager talk in market-place and synagogue. A teacher had come, report declared, who again spoke "in the name of the Lord." Once more God had visited His people. Once more there was a prophet in Israel.

The prophet was John the Baptist. The excitement stirred by his coming outdid any that news of battle or revolution could have provoked. Apart from the power of his preaching, apart from the success of his crusade, the mere fact that here was one who dared to teach as a prophet astounded Palestine. The news ran through the land like fire.

II

To understand this feeling, we must have in mind the religious history of the nation.

Over a long period two rival strains of doctrine had struggled for mastery. The one derived its strength from the priests, the other from the prophets. The priests encouraged the idea—natural enough in a race conscious of a religion nobler and purer than those of surrounding nations—that God could have no regard for any but the Jews. From the right doctrine that Jehovah alone was their God grew the wrong doctrine that Jehovah was their God

alone. With Israel only He had a covenant, and this covenant was embodied in the Law. Therefore the Law was all-important. The one virtue required of man was "righteousness," and righteousness began and ended, so the doctrine of the priests affirmed, in a precise observance of the letter of the Law.

The Temple, with its Holy of Holies and its code of sacrifices, strengthened this idea of a local and legal Deity; the loss of the Temple during the period of the Captivity weakened it. This enabled a new and nobler view of religion to be put forward by the prophets. They affirmed that God had a care for the Gentiles, and not for the Jews alone. They taught that true "righteousness" lay, not in the offering of sacrifices and mechanical obedience to the Law, but in uprightness of character, in purity of life, and in a will set to obey God. Their message was nobly summarized by Micah: "Shall I come before God with burnt offerings? Will the Lord be pleased with

thousands of rams, or ten thousand rivers of oil? He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?"

This prophetic doctrine, with its liberalism of outlook, its view of religion as a personal relationship with God, made a profound impression. For a time it overcame the sterile creed of legalism. But the re-building of the Temple after the Captivity restored the dominance of the priests. They fought against the influence of the prophets, and ultimately they prevailed. Prophecy was silenced. The prophetic writings already extant were to be understood only as the priests chose to interpret them. Further prophecy was forbidden. Through four-and-a-half centuries no writer dared to give religious teaching in his own name. New religious books had to be put forward under the names of great men of the past, and were given such titles as "The Assumption of Moses," "The Testaments of the

Twelve Patriarchs," "The Ascension of Isaiah." This literature, known as "Apocalyptic," was continued into New Testament times. It strove to hearten the Jews through ages of adversity by encouraging them to expect some great manifestation of God, when He would overthrow their enemies and establish a visible sovereignty among His chosen people. Thus the influence of Apocalyptic was to make devout Jews look forward to a triumphant coming of God's kingdom and the ending of alien rule. It linked their religious hopes with their political aspirations.

Yet Apocalyptic could not take the place of the prophetic teaching. It appealed to the imagination rather than to the conscience. Legalism tightened its grip as the official religion of Israel. As time went on, it was divided into two schools, under rival sets of leaders. In Jerusalem were the Sadducees; a small, aristocratic, and wealthy body of priests. On matters of religion their attitude was one of extreme

conservatism. Thus they, unlike all other Jews, rejected belief in the doctrine of angels, spirits, and immortality, on the ground that they could find no support for it in the Mosaic Law. They upheld the Law, and the Law alone.

Outside Jerusalem the direct power of the Sadducees was small. Elsewhere the religious leaders were the rival sect of the Pharisees, whose rabbis taught in most of the provincial synagogues. While the Sadducees adhered to the strict letter of the original Law, the Pharisees upheld it as expanded and interpreted by "tradition." In fact, with them the written and oral "traditions of the elders" were supreme. Their code regulated every moment of life, from birth to burial. The Jew found his most commonplace acts set about by ceremonies, and the ways in which he was to rise, wash, eat, work, clothe himself, and pray were all minutely prescribed for him. Exact observance of these multitudinous rules constituted "righteousness," and the

whole of righteousness. Honour, kindness, and mortality might be disregarded if some method could be found of circumventing, without technical infringement, the precepts which enjoined them. Any dubious point must be referred to a rabbi; none but the authorized rabbis were permitted to expound the Law, or to set forth the tradition which interpreted it.

In practice this code was a burden too heavy to be borne. Ordinary people could not escape frequent transgressions of it. Yet to violate it in any detail, even unintentionally, was to be unrighteous, and to incur the wrath of God. No wonder that eager souls yearned for teaching such as the prophets had given to bygone generations; teaching which brought the individual into touch with God, and set right conduct and desires above ceremonial observance. It seemed vain, after four-and-a-half centuries of silence, to expect a prophet's voice. Yet there was a gleam of hope in the remembrance that the latest of the prophets had

predicted the reappearance of Elijah before the day of the Lord should come.

III

Such, then, was the condition of Palestine in the year 26. It was an age of spiritual hunger and of political discontent. Its prevailing restlessness was increased by economic pressure. Under the old theocratic conception, taxes and dues were levied for religious purposes only. They had grown heavier with the increasing power of the priests, bent upon maintaining the Temple in splendour and themselves in opulence. But of this existing religious taxation the Romans took no account when they exacted tribute from Palestine, as from the other provinces of their Empire. Thus every Jew was doubly burdened, for civil and religious purposes. He had to supply both the Temple tax and Cæsar's tribute. This resulted in poverty and heightened discontent. Political upheaval or social revolt would have been welcomed

by multitudes. But blended with, and strengthening, all such desires was religious dissatisfaction. It could not be, surely, that God had forsaken His people. It could not be that He would suffer them indefinitely to bear the yoke of a heathen power, to remain despised and poverty-stricken. It could not be the final form of religion, this hopeless attempt to comply with an impossible code, this system of a wealthy and complacent priesthood, of rabbis revelling in casuistry that never touched the conscience, that never filled the hungry soul. There would be, there must be, a change. Prophecy and Apocalyptic alike had encouraged them to expect that Jehovah would manifest Himself, and send deliverance, and establish His kingdom. Yet the years passed on, and what sign was there of fulfilment? Where was the national leader, or the great social reformer, whom they could follow? Where was the promised Messiah; where the prophet who was to be the Messiah's

herald? In restless discontent, political, social, and religious; in hope that despaired and despair that yet hoped, the inhabitants of Palestine passed their days.

And then John the Baptist came.

Having in mind the facts we have summarized, can we wonder at the immense excitement caused by his coming? "All men reasoned in their hearts concerning John." Report said that he declared the Kingdom of God to be at hand. Could this indeed be—the Christ? Others brought news of his manner of life. He had dwelt in the wilderness; he wore, like Elijah, a garment of camel's hair and a leathern girdle, he was an ascetic—this, they said, must be Elijah reincarnate, sent as Malachi had foretold. At least he must be a prophet, for he was no Pharisee or Sadducee. In defiance of their prohibitions, he was teaching as the prophets of old had done. And so, full of eager talk, and wonder, and various surmises, the people streamed forth to hear him for themselves. From town

and village they came; "there went out unto him all the country of Judæa and all they of Jerusalem," to be joined presently by travellers from the northern territory of Galilee.

Their questions were promptly given explicit answers. John would have no misunderstanding about himself or his work. He was not, he said, the Christ. He was preparing the way for one greater than himself. He was not the leader of a social or political revolution, as many hoped. "What shall we do?" asked the most impoverished of his hearers, ready enough for pillage if he gave the word. But the answer was that the poor man should share the little he had with him who was even poorer. "What shall we do?" asked the publicans, Jews employed to collect the Roman tribute. It was a crucial question, like "Is it lawful to give tribute to Cæsar?" Perhaps the answer expected was: "You must abandon your calling. You must cease to collect these enforced payments

from your countrymen to an alien power, against which I shall encourage them to rise." But John's reply showed that he would lead no political movement, as his first answer had shown he would lead no social revolution. The publicans were merely warned not to exact more than was legally due. "And what shall we do?" asked the soldiers "on duty"—such is the force of the Greek word. They were Jewish soldiers employed probably, as we should say, on police duty. They too received no encouragement to desert or rebel. They were to levy no blackmail, and to be content with their pay. John's replies made it clear that he had not come to encourage any movement of class warfare, or any political insurrection against Rome.

His real message was comprised in the one word—Repent. He awoke dormant consciences. He stirred the sense of sin. He made men and women realize the worthlessness of that merely external "righteousness" which their official teachers upheld.

Like the old prophets, he insisted on the need of clean hands and a pure heart. More boldly even than the older prophets, he swept away the complacency of those who imagined all must be well with them in God's sight, whatever their conduct, since they belonged to His chosen race. "Think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father; for I say unto you that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham." They must bring forth "fruits meet for repentance," the fruits of a pure life. And through all this teaching sounded the note of extreme urgency; the time was short, the axe was already near the root of the tree; the kingdom of God was at hand!

Huge crowds heard, and trembled, and rejoiced, and were convinced. They owned their wrongdoings. They pledged themselves to nobler ways of life. Then, as an outward sign of repentance, they were baptized by John; they submitted to that rite of cleansing which was widely known,

and shared by many forms of religion. It was amazing to see those multitudes, of all classes, hastening to the banks of the Jordan. It was a time of vast significance in the history of Israel. It was the reinstatement of prophecy after a break of four-and-a-half centuries. It was one of the greatest spiritual revivals the world has known.

We are not to suppose that John baptized all who came indiscriminately, without question. The narrative makes it clear that he did not. When "many of the Pharisees and Sadducees" came, he discerned their motive, which was simply to find grounds for setting on foot proceedings again him. He met them with grim invective, and sent them away. The people whom he baptized must "confess their sins," must show themselves in private talk to be really penitent, before their baptism. Then, full of new hopes for themselves, and with an eager looking for the promised Kingdom of God, they returned. And all

men, having heard his teaching about righteousness, so akin to that of the bygone prophets, so unlike the narrow legalistic conception of the rabbis, acknowledged John to be a prophet indeed.

IV

One day among the travellers from Galilee who came to him was a carpenter of Nazareth, named Jesus.

He asked John to baptize him. But as they spoke together apart, John felt a strange sense of awe, recognized that here was a character the purity of which put his own to shame, and made him keenly conscious of his imperfections. "I have need to be baptized of thee," he remonstrated, "and comest thou to me?" But Jesus was insistent, "for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness," he said. The task which he and the Baptist would share—a task on which the Baptist already had been busy—was to rescue "righteousness" from the narrow interpretation fastened upon it

by legalism, and to "fulfil" it; to fill it full of new and true meaning. As a prelude to the accomplishing of that work, baptism was for Jesus an act, not of purification, but of consecration. He was baptized, and as he stepped out of the water, he saw the heavens open, and the Spirit of God descending as a dove, and heard a voice: "Thou art my beloved Son, in thee I am well pleased." The earliest of the Gospels (St. Mark's) makes it clear that the vision was seen, and the voice heard, by Jesus only. It must have been he who described it to John, and afterwards to his disciples, as he told them also of his temptations.

We will not involve ourselves here with questions which must needs be profoundly mysterious, and indeed unanswerable. We will not discuss the relationship between the divine and the human in the nature of Jesus Christ. So far as, in deep reverence, we can even venture our imperfect surmises, we shall be better equipped for such thinking when we have completed our study of the

life. Indeed, at the outset we shall do well to emphasize a truth that seems often to be forgotten. That fact is the cumulative character of the evidence for the claims of Jesus. People are far too apt to consider in isolation some one incident, or saying, or narrative. No limited scrutiny of that kind, however penetrating, will fit us to answer the question, "What think ye of Christ? Whose son is he?" The whole evidence must be grouped together. We must take into account the witness of the life, of the person, of the person revealed in the life. We must bring together the things said, and done, and taught, and endured. Little by little the testimony of each part, viewed in relation with the rest, will contribute to the ultimate decision on the whole. For that we must be content to wait. The ultimate decision must be made by each for himself. Not the baptism, or the temptation, or the teaching, or the ministry, or the incidental episodes, or even the crucifixion or the resurrection,

can provide logical ground for belief or scepticism apart from the rest. Out of them all, each helping and contributing its share, will grow our view of the personality of Jesus Christ, will be shaped our individual answer to claims which challenge every living soul.

Therefore it is well worth while to review the evidence again; to place ourselves, as it were, in the company of the historic Jesus; to watch, to listen, and to learn. This, if we have reached a clear decision already, may confirm it. This, if we are yet at a loss for one, may bring it. Anyhow, it is a task worth while. It will be with the facts that we concern ourselves. Let the opinions about the facts form themselves; let them be based upon the evidence.

V

Thus (returning to the baptism) we will not delay to speculate over the relations of the divine and human in Jesus. Nor need we pause to consider whether the

narrative of the signs—the opening of the heavens, the dove, the voice—is, or was meant to be, literally accurate. Possibly Jesus related this experience of his, like the experience of the temptations, in figurative language, language that best would reveal the intrinsic truth to his disciples. What is certain is that the baptism brought a spiritual crisis into the life of Jesus; that he became aware, if not for the first time, at least with a new sureness, of a divine mission and of supernatural powers. He knew himself to be the Christ, the promised Saviour. His work, as he now saw it, was to establish the heavenly kingdom, and to convince men of the truth which he had come to proclaim. How was that work best to be accomplished? What use was he to make of the powers with which he knew himself to be endowed? Before he began his public mission, he must decide once for all upon its character and scope.

Not with the Baptist, not with any of the

friends who had accompanied him from Galilee, could he face this tremendous problem. He must think it out alone. Insidious and plausible ideas beset him, ideas of methods by which, as it seemed, the accomplishment of his life-work might be made easier. But were they right? Were they in accord with the will of his Father in heaven? In solitude he must decide. He had to realize in all its bearings the astounding relevation he had received at the Jordan. He must know how to use, how to abstain from misusing, the unique force which stirred within him. Therefore he withdrew into the wilderness, far from men, alone "with the wild beasts," to quote a graphic detail of the narrative which he himself must have supplied.

There, after fierce agony of mind, the plans were made. There the battle against temptations was fought and won. In after-days he told his friends of that experience, and described in vivid imagery the powerful suggestions of evil which presented them-

selves, suggestions which in turn he resisted and drove away.

First came the idea that he would most readily gain the favour of the multitude if he used his power for material ends. Might they not listen more readily to his spiritual message when he had secured their bodily comfort? He had spent some thirty years in a town of Galilee. Few of its inhabitants were in easy circumstances. His own family was not indigent, yet belonged to that class which has no margin, is never free from anxiety, and is unable to meet any unforeseen demand on its resources. He understood keenly, as his subsequent teaching was to prove, the strain and worry of such conditions. He knew how anxiety about the morrow was apt to absorb the mind, to make it deaf to spiritual appeal. He saw, too, a large number of people whose conditions were far worse, beggars whose lives were spent in misery, squalor, and destitution. In bitter contrast were the

few rich men who fared sumptuously every day.

Here, then, seemed a short cut to the end he had in view. He might employ those supernatural powers of which he felt conscious in ending poverty and hunger. He could command the stones to become bread. Certainly that would draw the eyes of all to him, and give him a vast popularity. Thus, without danger and with no difficulties to overcome, he would have gained the ear of the public for whatever spiritual teaching he wished afterwards to give.

Yet his inner self knew this most plausible idea to be wrong. It seemed to make his task easy. In reality it would make it impossible. It would emphasize the very idea he had come to overthrow, that material things were of a chief importance. He was to teach that man does not live by bread alone. He was to give the world a new set of values, in which the life of the spirit was to transcend all else. That must be difficult enough, but it would

become impossible had he been recognized as one whose most important work was to relieve bodily hunger. When later in special circumstances, he did multiply food for those who had listened to him, the result was that people sought him, not from high motives, "but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled." At least his whole campaign should not be hindered by an initial mistake of that kind. He fought the temptation. He mastered it.

To it succeeded another, as dangerous and as plausible as the first. He, in the eyes of the world an unknown peasant, had somehow to gain its attention. Whatever the wisdom of his message, no result would follow unless he could gain a hearing for it. Moreover, it would run counter to accepted ideas. It would provoke the hostility of every religious authority, whether Pharisee or Sadducee. How could he hope for a hearing. One way seemed obvious. He could rely on his supernatural powers. He could do things so dramatic, so striking, that all the world would talk and

wonder; things like a sudden appearance on a pinnacle of the Temple, whence he would float down to an awestruck and worshipping assemblage in the courts below. He was sure that he possessed such powers, and we can understand how intense was the temptation to put them to sensational use. By other means, how slow at best must be his progress! But by these within how short a time would the multitudes be hanging upon his every word! Yet he knew the falsity of such reasoning. It was not as a worker of spectacular prodigies that he would be known among men. He desired to persuade, not to astonish; not to dazzle eyes or excite minds, but to transform hearts. Again, he fought that temptation and mastered it.

A third presented itself. A large proportion of the Jews expected the Messiah to proclaim himself their king, to set himself at the head of armies, and to lead them to battle and conquest against the Empire which held them in thrall. To be recognized as the Messiah, must he not fulfil those expectations? He

could stir patriotism to its depths. The whole nation would rally to his call. With his powers, there was no limit to what he might achieve. He might pass from triumph to triumph, until Cæsar himself had made way for him. All the kingdoms of the world seemed to lie before him, and there was a voice which said "All these things will I give thee, if——" . . . But not thus, not by violence and warfare, was the Kingdom of God to be set up, not thus was the Father's will to be done. Once more, he fought that temptation and mastered it.

Spent with that terrific mental conflict, but victorious, he returned from the wilderness.

VI

In past times some harm was done by describing this episode as "the temptation." The phrase encouraged a false idea that Jesus, having won this threefold victory in the wilderness, was exempt from temptation through the rest of his life. His own words refute

that error, as when he praises his disciples because "ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations." Indeed, there can have been no day when he did not feel the pressure of temptation in some degree. Yet it must be true also that there was no day when his resistance to other temptations was not made easier by the victories in the wilderness at the outset of his career. And there was no day when the decisions then reached did not influence his methods.

That fact has to be remembered throughout our study of the Gospel narratives. With tranquil detachment, he seems to view material things as of small account. Inevitably he seems to reject every opportunity of using his powers in a sensational fashion to compel the homage of his countrymen. Serenely he turns from an excited crowd which would acclaim him as king in order that he may lead them in revolts. Thus we are apt to suppose that such lures had no attraction for him. On the contrary, each had appealed to him intensely. At the cost of tremendous effort, and

after real agony, he had renounced them. He had faced and conquered them so thoroughly in the wilderness that afterwards they could not discompose him seriously. But only because of this great moral decision, and not easily or because they did not attract him, did he abstain from using them.

Thus the baptism had given Jesus a full consciousness of his mission. The temptations in the wilderness had shown certain plausible ways of attempting to accomplish it which he must not employ. But what was the right method? How was his great task to be done?

For a time, perhaps while his thoughts were shaping themselves into decision, Jesus remained with the Baptist. He helped in proclaiming the message of repentance. Some of his friends from Galilee, who had been among John's disciples, now attached themselves to Jesus—at the suggestion, it seems, of the Baptist himself. They took a share in baptizing the crowds that came to the Jordan. Jesus himself did not. He wished to support and endorse the work of John, not to be accounted

his rival. But he was unable to prevent it. His wonderful charm attracted many who were dismayed by the stern austerity of John. The numbers that thronged him grew while the hearers of John diminished. "All men come to him!" complained John's loyal disciples, jealous for his fame. The great-hearted Baptist rejoiced in the fact, believed Jesus to be the Messiah and himself but the Messiah's herald. "He must increase, but I must decrease," he said.

Yet even an appearance of rivalry, as Jesus saw, must hamper the special work of the Baptist. Moreover, friction between the two groups of disciples became inevitable. Soon there was the beginning of a dispute between them about fasting, because Jesus did not follow the ascetic rule of John. Evidently the time had come for a separation. The time had come, too, when Jesus must prepare to begin his own work. So far, he had been assisting a prophet and preaching as a prophet. In a sense, he would continue that work to the end. He would carry far beyond any other

that insistence on personal character, on inward purity, on direct communion with God, which had been characteristic of the older prophets and had been revived by the Baptist. Such messages would not of themselves, however, suffice to meet the needs of his day. There was a wide range of subjects on which he must speak which lay outside the prophetic scope. Only the recognized religious teachers were allowed to handle them. Only they were allowed to touch the subjects comprised under the Law.

Jesus was resolved to end the old contrast and antagonism between the Law and the prophets. He was resolved, as he had told John, to fulfil *all* righteousness; to interpret the true meaning of righteousness as contained by the Law and the prophets alike. He was not come, as he declared subsequently, to destroy either the Law or the prophetic message; he was come to "fulfil" —to fill full of meaning—both alike. He would be in the most favourable position to accomplish this if he approached the public

as a Teacher of the Law. New and startling indeed his interpretation of it must seem. But thus best would his work be done.

So the choice was made. As yet he would make no proclamation of his Messiahship. He would not come forward as one claiming kingship, or as a revolutionary, or as a social reformer. Let the leaven work quietly from within. Presently the day for disclosure would come. Meanwhile he must teach. He must adopt outwardly the career of a rabbi. This, in the eyes of the world, was to be his profession. He would be Jesus the Teacher.

CHAPTER II

THE TEACHER

I

THE Gospels were designed, not as complete biographies of Jesus, but as records of his ministry. Therefore they are silent concerning his life between infancy and the beginning of public work at the age of thirty. As in all the four Gospels there is but one exception to this rule, we may be sure that the exception has some very special significance. It must have been admitted because it seemed to throw light upon the ministry itself.

St. Luke, who seems to have had it from the Mother of Jesus, gives us this episode. It is the familiar story of the boy Jesus among the doctors of the Law. On their return journey from the Passover at Jerusalem,

Mary and Joseph discovered that he was not, as they had supposed, in the caravan from Nazareth. So they returned to Jerusalem, and, after a long search, found him among the rabbis in the Temple, "both hearing them and asking them questions." When they remonstrated, the boy answered, "How is it that ye sought me? Wist ye not that I must be in my Father's house?" And then he went with them to Nazareth.

Why was this solitary anecdote of the boyhood incorporated by St. Luke in his Gospel? Surely because it revealed the interests and ambitions of Jesus as a child, and therefore illuminated his subsequent career. When he was but twelve the boy showed what he would like to be when he was grown up. He loved the Temple at his first sight of it. And, child as he was, he loved it not for its outward splendour, but for its inward and spiritual significance; "my Father's house," he termed it.[1] He felt drawn to the rabbis.

[1] The accuracy of the R.V. rendering "in my Father's house" (replacing the "about my Father's

He joined himself to their catechetical class, and astounded both them and casual listeners by "his understanding and his answers." There, utterly absorbed, he was found by Mary and Joseph. Obediently, yet we may guess with what reluctance, he rose at their call and journeyed with them back to Nazareth.

But he had decided, as children will, what should be his profession! The work of a religious teacher—that was his choice. Perhaps in those childish games, which he described long afterwards, when others played at weddings or funerals, the child Jesus ever liked best to play at being a rabbi with his class about him. At the time, few things could have seemed less likely than the fulfilment of the boy's wish. The rabbis belonged to a higher social class; Jesus would have to carry on as carpenter. Yet Mary knew what her

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business" of the A.V.) has been strikingly confirmed more recently by the evidence of the papyri. See the Moulton-Milligan *Vocabulary of the Greek New Testament*, p. 209.

neighbours did not, and, like many a loving mother, she treasured the memory of her son's early words. She kept them in her heart, and long afterwards, when the boyish wish had been gloriously fulfilled, confided them to St. Luke. That at least seems to explain naturally the inclusion of this incident in his Gospel. It was not only striking and beautiful in itself; there must have been numberless incidents in the youth and early manhood of Jesus which deserved those adjectives. But it revealed, as did no other, the significant fact that at the age of twelve he had already set his heart upon that calling which afterwards he followed.

Yet the opportunity for taking it up was long deferred. As a child doubtless Jesus attended the school attached to the synagogue at Nazareth. Then, until he was about thirty years of age, he had to follow the trade of a carpenter. We cannot tell if some improvement in the family fortunes, or conceivably the disposal of the business after Joseph's death, set him free to join the Baptist by the

Jordan. But when the baptism had brought clear consciousness of his messianic mission, and the struggle in the wilderness had made impossible the use of rapid and sensational methods for its accomplishment, the questions of the means he should employ must have confronted him afresh. The result was to strengthen his early idea. Not yet could his divine claims be put forward. Not yet could he assert himself publicly as the Messiah. His hour was not yet come. First, he must teach, and the teaching would reveal what he was to those who listened rightly and set themselves to obey. Not through outward proclamation, but through inward conviction would grow faith of the kind he desired. For the present, he would sow the seed, he would set the leaven to work. He would be a teacher.

To be a religious teacher in Palestine at this period meant to join a clearly-defined profession, with its own position, mode of life, and carefully-guarded privileges. The point is often forgotten. Jesus in the eyes

of his contemporaries was not a private individual, roaming about the country and discoursing casually with people he met. He was as definitely a teacher as Matthew had been a publican and Simon a fisherman. He was recognized as a member of a learned profession. By the general public, especially in the earlier stages of his work, he was unhesitatingly identified as a "scribe," as one of those authorized "teachers of the Law," to whom, as a sign of respect, the title of "rabbi" was accorded. This idea would be strengthened when his listeners heard him begin to speak on topics which these authorized teachers alone were permitted to handle. Yet, as they listened further, how vastly new and strange proved his treatment of the themes! Thus we are able to appreciate the real force of a sentence in the Gospels which is commonly misunderstood. They who heard him were "increasingly astonished"—such is the exact force of the tense used—"at his teaching. For he taught as one having a scribe's authority, yet not as their scribes."

II

If we ask why Jesus chose to give this form to his work, why he made himself known as a rabbi, despite the sharp contrast between his own and the rabbinic doctrines, answers are not difficult to suggest. This very unlikeness between his own teaching and the conventional beliefs of other "teachers of the Law" may have been a reason for his choice. He had begun as a fellow-worker with a prophet. When he delivered his own message, he might be not only misrepresented by his enemies, but misunderstood by his friends as an opponent of the Law. What he said must be so new, startling, and unexpected that it might be construed as an attack upon the Law which formed the foundation of the Jewish creed. Yet it was not to the Law but to legalism that he was opposed. So far from attacking the Law, he said, he had come to give it new force and to fulfil it. Not one jot or tittle of it should pass away. He would show that its claims were far more pervasive,

and went far deeper below the surface of life, than its conventional exponents imagined. To overcome the initial suspicion that he was hostile to the Law, he could take no course more effectual than to appear as a rabbi, as one of the Law's accredited champions and interpreters.

Again, unless he were recognized as a rabbi, he would be debarred from handling many subjects about which new teaching was most needed. Any person thought competent, any layman as we should say, might speak, even in the synagogue, about religion in general, and questions of morals or ethics. These were considered of less importance. But the Law and the traditions were a province strictly confined to the rabbis. Unless he had appeared as a rabbi, it would have been impossible for Jesus to teach publicly, as he desired to do, concerning such matters as marriage, prayer, fasting, and the observance of the Sabbath, or to discuss the traditions—the things "said by them of old time." But as a recognized rabbi he would be ex-

pected to treat such themes. As a matter of course, too, he would be invited to address the congregation by the rulers of each synagogue he visited. Thus the profession he chose gave Jesus freedom of speech, and made it easier for him to ensure a hearing, during the earlier days of his ministry.

It had other advantages as well. He desired to journey about the country accompanied by disciples. They were to be his friends, whose love would be his solace. They were to be also the earliest members of that society he designed to found, which should transmit and spread his message when his own ministry on earth was over. It was the common practice of rabbis to surround themselves with groups of disciples, and to travel in their company. Thus, as a rabbi, Jesus was able to fulfil his purpose, and stirred no suspicion by doing so. But this would have been very difficult had he not been accounted a religious teacher. Almost inevitably he and the group of men surrounding him would have been suspect. Roman officials would

have supposed them to be conspirators, engaged on propagating sedition.

Finally, to work as a rabbi solved for Jesus the problem of subsistence. It was a common custom for prominent rabbis to be maintained by devout women of wealth. Of this custom he availed himself, and St. Luke's Gospel records the names of some who "ministered of their substance," and thus provided for the simple needs of Jesus and his disciples. It was a custom open to abuse, and Jesus denounced those rabbis who "devoured widows' houses." But those whose help he accepted were wealthy, and by this means he was able to concentrate wholly upon his mission, and was set free from the necessity of manual labour.

Thus after baptism and temptation Jesus determined to work as a rabbi, and to teach until the time came for him to announce himself publicly as the Messiah. The Gospel narratives become far more luminous when we remember this fact. Small details become significant. He sits down to speak to his

disciples or the multitude; a rabbi stood to pray or read; when he sat down, it was a sign that he was about to give instruction. Jesus, the well-known rabbi, handled freely themes with which none but a rabbi was allowed to deal. Like other rabbis, he clothed much of his instruction in parables—though how different were his from the others! When some pupil answered a question particularly well, a rabbi's custom was to show his approval by kissing the speaker. So Jesus did to a rich young man whose words pleased him, and thus we understand what is meant by the phrase of our English version which states that "Jesus, looking upon him, loved him." Again, our English version, by using the ambiguous word "Master," obscures the fact that it was as "Rabbi"—"which is to say, Teacher"—that Jesus was habitually addressed, by friends and enemies alike.

We may realize easily the amazement which Jesus stirred among the people of his time. Here, to all appearance, was a scribe. He lived and worked as a scribe. Yet his

teaching was utterly at variance with the scribes' doctrine, and of the scribes themselves he spoke with withering denunciation. No wonder that the people were at once attracted and bewildered. No wonder that the scribes soon plotted to bring about his downfall.

III

The writers of the Gospels purposely limited themselves, as we have seen, to describing the ministry of Jesus instead of attempting a full account of his life. Therefore its exact chronology at many points is obscure, and there have been elaborate controversies about it, as unprofitable as they are laborious. It seems clear, however, that there were three years between the baptism and the crucifixion. But then we are confronted by the strange fact that, after the temptation in the wilderness, all the events described by the synoptic Gospels—*i.e.,* St. Mark, St. Matthew, and St. Luke—belong to the last two of these three years. Of the first year they say noth-

ing. Only from the Fourth Gospel we gather that, with the exception of a visit lasting "not many days" to Galilee, this year was spent in Jerusalem and its neighbourhood. And all that this Gospel attributes to the first year comes within its first four months. Three of the Gospels are silent about the whole year; the Fourth is silent about eight months of it.

What is the cause of this gap? How are we to account for this "year of obscurity," as it is often termed? Various explanations have been put forward. One is that the Evangelists were silent simply because they had no information about the events of the year. This, however, if the year were one of active ministry, seems most improbable. Another theory is that before beginning his work in Galilee Jesus felt bound to deliver his message first in Jerusalem itself, and the Fourth Gospel indicates that he spent the time in Jerusalem and Judæa. But there, it is argued, he had no success. He failed to make any impression upon the people of Jerusalem, and accordingly, after many months of unsuccess-

ful effort, migrated to the north country of Galilee. The Evangelists, if we accept this theory, "passed by his activity at the headquarters of the nation as a work with merely negative results"[1] and concentrated upon describing the later and more successful Galilæan ministry. Yet it seems unlikely that the failure in Jerusalem would have been so complete. It is unlikely that many months of work would have brought about no incident worthy of record. And it is most unlikely that, even were the failure quite unredeemed, the Evangelists would not, with their habitual candour, have written a sentence or two admitting this fact, and epitomising the many months it covered.

The point which we have reached in the story of Jesus seems to suggest another explanation. It seems simpler to believe that the writers whose chosen task was to describe his ministry began their account with his arrival in Galilee because it was then that his min-

[1] The phrase is taken from Dr. Stalker's *Life of Jesus Christ.*

istry began. But how, then, were the previous eight months occupied? Almost inevitably, we may think, in preparing for the work. Jesus was exchanging the occupation of an artisan for a learned profession. He was about to come before the world as a rabbi. We recall again that early episode of his boyhood, when he joined himself to the rabbis' class in the Temple. It had stirred his childish interest. It would have a stronger attraction now. Would he not now renew that experience, studying closely both the methods, many of which he was himself to employ, and the doctrine, with so much of which he could not agree? He would desire to acquaint himself thoroughly with the official religious teaching of his time, in order that he might confirm what was right in it, and rectify what was wrong. He would require to be thoroughly versed both in the Law itself, and in the traditions which were held to interpret it.

For this purpose, he would need to learn the language in which the Scriptures were

written. The spoken language of the time was Aramaic. A large proportion of the Jews were bi-lingual, and spoke Greek also. It seems almost certain that Jesus himself could speak Greek, though Aramaic was his habitual tongue. But the Scriptures were written in Hebrew. The working-class Jews did not know Hebrew. Therefore when Scripture was read aloud in the synagogue services, an interpreter stood beside the reader, translating what the other read in Hebrew into the Aramaic which the people understood.

It seems most unlikely that Jesus would have had any opportunity of learning Hebrew during his childhood, when he attended what we should now term an "elementary" school, or during the years that he worked as a carpenter. Yet early in his Galilæan ministry he officiated at a synagogue service in Nazareth and read from the synagogue roll—written, of course, in Hebrew—a portion of Isaiah. By this time, therefore, certainly he knew Hebrew. It seems reasonable to suppose that he acquired

this, with much other learning, during the previous months at Jerusalem.

No doubt, such an attempt to explain "the year of obscurity" must remain, like any other, incapable of proof. Yet the claim may be ventured for it that it does seem to fit the facts. Let us imagine the active ministry to have begun immediately after Jesus had left the Baptist. Perplexing questions would at once suggest themselves. Where and when had he obtained his close acquaintance with rabbinical customs and doctrines? How could he who had lived and worked to the age of thirty as an artisan suddenly appear, and be accepted without question as, a member of a learned profession? It would be necessary to suppose that some wholly miraculous means of acquiring knowledge were bestowed upon him—a theory which even we who admit most fully his divine claims would be loth to accept. Not merely would it conflict with that gradual "increase in wisdom" which St. Luke was careful to record, but it would

mar the perfect humanity we reverence. His matchless skill and knowledge as a teacher would compel less, not more, admiration from us were they attained without effort. But the "year of obscurity" provides a simple way of escape from such difficulties. It seems natural to conclude that through these months, spent mainly in Jerusalem, Jesus was training himself for the form of ministry he had decided to adopt. He was thinking things out, and observing, and studying themes and methods. He was learning in order that he might teach. He never grudged time spent in preparing himself for the great turning-point in his life. At length this task was done. He had decided upon the methods he would use. The technical knowledge required was his. He had examined intimately the official religion of his day, and discerned the reasons of its failure. He was equipped to come forward, no longer as a carpenter, but as a rabbi. The ministry, and with it the Gospels' record of the ministry, began.

IV

The Gospels make quite clear what was the immediate cause of the beginning. News came that Herod, the ruler of Galilee, had arrested and imprisoned the Baptist. At once Jesus hastened to Galilee and preached there. After the first thirteen verses of his Gospel, which summarize the story of the Baptist's mission and the baptism and temptation of Jesus, St. Mark opens his main narrative in this characteristic fashion:

Now after that John was delivered up, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying, The time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe in the gospel.

The austere restraint of that matter-of-fact sentence conceals the heroism of the action it describes. Herod Antipas suspected the announcement of a new "kingdom" at

hand to be the language of a revolutionary. Therefore he threw John into prison. At once Jesus hastened into Herod's territory to repeat what the Baptist had said. It was a direct challenge to Herod. It was a contemptuous proof that John's imprisonment would not check the spreading of John's message. And it was the first of the many acts of magnificent courage recorded of Jesus in the Gospels.

Too often readers fail to discern them, being misled by the tranquil language. "After that John was delivered up, Jesus came into Galilee"—it is only when we pause to consider what the words involve that we realize the intrepidity set before us. The charm, the tenderness, the sympathy of Jesus—these are readily seen by every reader of the Gospels. But their unemotional language leaves us to perceive for ourselves that indomitable courage without which any idea of his character must be pitifully false. Artists also, perhaps, by their conventional portraits, have accentuated so much the wistful gentleness of

Jesus that they have obscured his majestic strength.

Indeed the peril he faced by entering Herod's territory was very real, and increased throughout his stay there. Here again the tranquil language of the Gospels is apt to mislead us. As Dr. Headlam[1] has shown, many of the journeys with disciples were no leisurely preaching tours, but forced movements to escape Herod's emissaries. Else the work of Jesus, like that of John, would have been brought to a premature end. The time for the announcement of his Messiahship must come first.

So Jesus travelled from Jerusalem to Galilee, to reiterate John's message and to begin his own work as a rabbi. He made his home at Capernaum. Why there, rather than at Nazareth? Partly because the people of Nazareth were jealous of him, and the home atmosphere there was difficult, with brethren

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[1]In his Belden Noble lectures, *Jesus Christ in History and Faith.* (1925.)

who mocked his words. Partly because his first disciples and closest friends, who had been with him in the south by the Jordan, had their homes at Capernaum. But also because Capernaum stood on the shore of the Sea of Galilee. The opposite coast was outside the control of Herod Antipas and under the rule of Philip, a far more amiable character. From Capernaum, therefore, Jesus could escape quickly in case of threatened arrest. With a view to such an emergency the disciples kept one of their boats in readiness. Not only as a matter of convenience did Jesus use it when he preached to the multitudes on the beach. Should news come that Herod's officials were approaching, at once the disciples compel their master to embark, and take him swiftly out of Herod's jurisdiction.

Having confirmed the Baptist's message, and having endorsed in this way the teaching of the last and greatest prophet, Jesus entered upon his own work of reinterpreting the Law. At first he was invited by the rulers of the synagogues, like other visiting rabbis,

to take part in the services and to address the congregations. "He spake in their synagogues, being glorified of all." Afterwards there came a change of methods. His vast influence upon the people stirred the jealousy of the official religious teachers, and they would not allow him to be heard in the synagogues. Even if they had the multitudes which habitually thronged to hear him were far larger than any building could contain. Of necessity, therefore, Jesus gave much of his later teaching out-of-doors. But we get a quite false idea of the early ministry if we suppose that Jesus appeared to his listeners as a kind of unauthorized lay preacher, apart from, or even hostile to, the religious organizations of his age. Later on, it is true, official jealousy forced him into something like that position. At the outset, however, no one who came to hear him doubted that he was coming to hear the teaching of a rabbi—most unexpected and most startling as the teaching of this rabbi proved to be.

Soon after he had begun his work, he

visited Nazareth,[1] and here he first met with hostility. The facts we have been considering explain it. Some of his fellow townsmen in the synagogue of Nazareth were profoundly impressed by the charm both of his message and his manner. But, among others, the chief feeling was one of resentment at his reappearance among them, not as the artisan they had known, but as a rabbi. If some distinguished teacher of the Law visited Nazareth, by all means let him occupy the seat of authority in their synagogue. It was a very different matter, they argued, when one of their own number, of the same social rank and education as themselves, presumed to come back as a member of a learned profession and claimed to instruct them. Where had he got his knowledge? What were these stories of mighty works attributed to him? "Why, we know all about him," they said. " 'Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, and brother

[1] "It was not a private visit to his family; he came as a rabbi, surrounded by his scholars."—Dr. Swete, *Commentary on St. Mark,* vi. 1.

of James and Joses and Judas and Simon? And are not his sisters here with us?' And they were offended in him."

Jesus, the Evangelist adds, "marvelled because of their unbelief." He quoted the proverb that only in his own country, and among those who know him well, is the teacher unhonoured. They failed to realize, these comrades of his younger years, the vast change that had befallen him. He had lived among them as Jesus the carpenter. That time was past. The day would come when he must publicly enter the capital as Jesus the Christ. Meanwhile, he would be known as Jesus the rabbi. Some, even as he taught, would have their eyes opened, would discern for themselves the final and overwhelming truth about him. Others at least would be made more ready for its disclosure. He must teach the laws of the Kingdom and the conditions of entry to it before the Kingdom itself could be proclaimed.

CHAPTER III

THE TEACHING BY WORD

I

THE work of Jesus in Galilee seems to have extended over two years. It is possible to mark certain definite stages in it, and to see how its conditions altered as time went on. But it is not possible to place all the events described by the Gospels in their strict sequence of time. The writers of the Gospels nade no attempt to supply a day-by-day diary. The happenings of a month or more are sometimes compressed into a few sentences, or even omitted entirely. We can say that probably chronological order is followed more closely by St. Mark than by the other Evangelists. All of them, however, were far more anxious to make clear the teaching of Jesus than to set forth the precise moment at which

each part of that teaching was given. In other words, their habit was to group sayings upon one subject, or incidents illuminating some special point in his doctrine, even though the sayings were spoken and the incidents occurred at considerable intervals. Again, what is brought before us apparently as a connected discourse may consist sometimes of various utterances originally spoken at various times and in various places.

This has long since been recognized by scholars, and, with it, the fact that any attempt to reconstruct exactly the story of these years must needs be full of what are, at best, probable surmises. Another point —and of this scholars seem more apt to be forgetful—is that Jesus is most unlikely to have given the most important parts of his teaching on one occasion only. One of the most common type of supposed New Testament problems is caused when St. Matthew (let us say) records some special piece of teaching as given in one setting, while St. Luke attributes it to another place and occa-

sion. All the learned arguments that follow are based on the assumption that Jesus could not have said the same things twice, in slightly varied forms. Yet how strange his action if he did not! We know that the rabbis repeated over and over, and made their disciples learn by heart, the principles to which they attached special importance. We may feel confident that Jesus, teaching as a rabbi, would follow this method. He was travelling from place to place. He was continually instructing new audiences. Are we to imagine that he would never use again some parable which had served particularly well to enforce his point, or that many of those marvellously compact sentences summarizing main points in his doctrine—such as the "Beatitudes," for example—were not spoken by him time and time again?

After all, however, it is the things said by Jesus that matter. Whether any particular saying was said on this occasion, or on that —or, as well may be, on both—is of far less importance. In these pages, at least, we need

not concern ourselves with such discussions. We will not try to arrange in strict chronological sequence the various episodes related by the various Evangelists. Our aim here will be quite different. It will be to place ourselves, so far as we can, among those who first listened to Jesus, to share their points of view, to understand the effect of his words upon them. Putting aside, as far as possible, all prepossessions, we will watch, and listen, and learn, studying the teacher in relation with his age and his surroundings.

II

What has been written already may serve to remove one quite false idea which is still very common. People imagine Jesus appearing to his contemporaries as one of the very poor, as a carpenter who left his work and travelled about Palestine in almost abject poverty as a kind of self-constituted lay evangelist. That may be an attractive picture. But emphatically it is not the picture given by the Gospels when these

are rightly understood. It is true that Jesus had been a carpenter. Yet he was a recognized member of a learned profession when his ministry began at Capernaum. "Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher sent from God" was the way in which Nicodemus addressed him at a first meeting. That was not the fashion in which one of the chief Pharisees, a member of the Jewish Council, would speak to a carpenter! In the last week of his life, at Jerusalem, his credentials as an authorized rabbi were challenged: "By what kind of authority doest thou these things, and who gave thee that authority?"—but until that time they seem to have been admitted without serious demur even by his opponents. They attacked bitterly his teaching, but not his authority as a teacher. Indeed, their resentment was the greater because it was, as they supposed, from a rabbi himself that there came the scathing exposure of rabbinism.

Again, Jesus was not one of the very poor. His sympathy with the poor was wonderful, yet he never identifies himself with them.

"Blessed are ye"—not "we"—"poor," is his word, and "the poor ye have always with you, but me ye have not always." His first disciples, a group of fishermen from the Sea of Galilee, were themselves employers of hired servants and moderately well-to-do. During their travels with Jesus they were supported, as we have noted, by gifts from wealthy adherents, as were other rabbis and their companions. Often they were welcome guests in rich men's houses. Jesus had indeed his ups and downs of worldly fortune, and, as the oppositions of the religious authorities and of Herod increased, many became afraid to show him hospitality. Thus there came at least one moment when he had nowhere to lay his head. Yet to use that pathetic phrase as though it described the normal condition of the life of Jesus is simply to ignore the evidence of the Gospels.

Jesus was seldom houseless. But almost throughout his years of ministry he was homeless. This, unlike poverty, must have been one of the severest trials in his life. No

longer had he any place in the household at Nazareth. His brethren derided him. Even his mother feared for his reason. He secured a lodging in the house of one of his fishermen-friends at Capernaum. Towards the very end he did find another home, full of welcome and tenderness and peace, at Bethany. How often, though, through the intervening years of work, Jesus must have craved a home! How seldom he was allowed quiet and privacy! He had great need of both, not only for rest, but for prayer, and thought, and the planning of his work, and the preparation of his teaching. "But thou, when thou prayest," he counselled, "enter into thine inner chamber, and having shut thy door. . . ." Practicable enough for others, not for himself, who had no solitude in an inner chamber at his command! All he could contrive was to escape sometimes to the lonely hills behind Capernaum for thought and prayer. Even that had to be done under the befriending darkness of night; else before long his disciples, perhaps with a crowd at their heels,

would come hurrying to the place where he was.

The immense and immediate success, as it seemed, of his work in Galilee was to prove a vast hindrance to its accomplishment as Jesus desired, and an enormous strain upon the teacher.

III

For the effect produced from the first by the teaching of Jesus was vast. He began, as we have seen, in the synagogue of Capernaum. Very soon his fame had gone far beyond the limits of that town. Crowds flocked into it from the neighbouring places, simply that they might see and hear this wonderful rabbi. What, we may wonder, was the "report of him" which, in St. Mark's phrase, "went out straightway everywhere into all the regions of Galilee round about"? What gave Jesus this attractive power?

It was not any declaration of his Messiahship. Had he proclaimed himself the expected Christ, that would have accounted

fully for any degree of popular excitement. But, in point of fact, fully conscious of his Messiahship though he was, he made as yet no public announcement of it. The hour was not yet come. Much teaching must be given first. Once only, in the synagogue of Nazareth, he ventured on a tentative disclosure, by reading certain messianic prophecies of Isaiah and applying them to himself. Promptly he was cast out of the synagogue and an attempt was made upon his life; the result, no doubt, of local jealousy. But it served to emphasize the risks of a premature disclosure. Had he plainly revealed himself in Capernaum as the Messiah, immediately he would have brought popular feeling to a fever-heat. Some who heard would immediately have tried to assassinate him as a dangerous blasphemer. But a far greater number would have hailed him with frantic enthusiasm, would have tried—as on a later day a concourse did try—to make him their king, would have flocked to him as the leader of an immediate national revolt against Rome.

Therefore Jesus kept his secret. He did not claim to be the Messiah in his teaching. Even his close companions did not yet suspect it. When, before long, some were startled into a dawning conviction that this must be none other than the Christ, he insisted that they should not spread abroad their belief. Evidently, then, it was not by any announcement of himself as the Messiah that he attracted the multitudes in Galilee.

Many were drawn by his repute as a healer. The use of his powers in this way was indeed an essential part of his scheme of teaching; his teaching healed, and his healing taught. Its full significance is a point which we shall have to consider presently. But at this stage we should observe that the works of healing were not in the early days of the ministry the chief factor in gathering the crowds that surrounded Jesus. Primarily, these people came, not to see the things he did, but to hear the words he said. They had been told of him as a wonderful rabbi. He attracted them as a teacher who sometimes healed, not as a

healer who sometimes taught. When he was in Capernaum, they filled the synagogue, they thronged him for hours at a time on the beach. If they heard that he had retreated to the hills, they pursued him there indefatigably, they invaded a private house where he was known to be, "so that there was no longer room for them, no, not even about the door." When he had undergone the strain of speaking to a concourse in the open air for hour after hour and was utterly worn out, they were still craving for more. The disciples, seeing his fatigue, hurried him into their boat and set off for the other side, and so profound was his sleep of exhaustion that not even the tumult of a hurricane could wake him. Yet some of his audience also embarked in boats, in the desperate hope that he would teach again on the opposite shore.

When he travelled, the inhabitants of each town or village he entered clustered eagerly about him. Simply that they might listen to this teacher, pilgrims came to

Galilee from north and south. They came from the distant ports of Tyre and Sidon, cities with heathen populations. They came from the country about Jordan, from Judæa and from Jerusalem itself. The Evangelists record these facts with the utmost simplicity. But when we illuminate their succinct narrative by consulting a map, by noting the distances travelled and by remembering the difficulties of travel, we begin to realize what passionate enthusiasm there was to hear Jesus during the early days of his ministry. When, again, we look for the causes producing this effect, when we enquire what it was that attracted and fascinated those who listened to him, the Gospels give us an explicit answer. It was the novelty of his message. New rabbis going a round of the provincial synagogues were common enough. But none of them spoke as this man. Here was not merely a new teacher, but a new teaching. It is easy for us, after nineteen Christian centuries, to forget how amazingly

novel the fundamental doctrines of Jesus—doctrines we have come to regard as ethical truisms—appeared to the folk who first heard them. Yet their feelings are vividly depicted by the Evangelists. Those who listened were "increasingly astonished." They were "all amazed," reports St. Mark, and "they questioned among themselves, saying 'What is this? A new teaching!' "

IV

In what way was it new? Here, once more, we have need to distinguish. It was a novelty, not of theme, but of treatment. When a stranger drew near to the seated teacher, and had worked his way through the crowd until at last he came within earshot, probably enough there would be no surprise in the first impressions he received. This rabbi was speaking of the things about which rabbis were expected to speak. In fact, they were the authorized exponents of such themes. "Prayer," "fasting," "alms," "the sabbath," "the great com-

mandments of the Law"—as the listener caught such words, he would compose himself to receive instruction of the normal rabbinical kind. Or the first words that reached him might be "the kingdom of God," when he would know that the theme of the moment was one which figured largely in the religious discussions of the time. But after a few sentences the casual listener's tranquil expectation would be changed to startled wonder. "What is this? a new teaching!" The old themes were being handled in a way amazingly new.

Here indeed we touch what was the chief characteristic of Jesus as a teacher. In the ultimate sense, he was far less an innovator than an interpreter and revealer. He neither destroyed any essential part of the accepted creed of his age nor did he add any new articles to it. "Not to destroy, but to fulfil" was the keynote of his method. What he did was to take the current creed and ideals and religious institutions of the Jews and reveal in them a vital power and significance

that no one else had suspected. Whether the point was the fundamental belief in God, or such a detail of life as the right use of the sabbath, Jesus disclosed to his astonished hearers the real worth and dynamic power of the creed already in their possession. It was, as we have seen, an age of spiritual hunger. It was a time when the masses craved eagerly some form of religion which should make God real, and duty an inspiration, and life an opportunity of happy service, and the divine kingdom more than a distant dream. And then came Jesus, not to give them a new religion, but to show that what they had already could satisfy all their needs when once its true contents were discerned. The excitement of listening to this teacher was the excitement of discovering that the wealth you had craved for years was already yours, only you had never perceived it until your eyes were opened.

There came a day when Jesus set forth this truth by an acted parable. A pathetic and weary multitude lacked food. How

should they be fed in the wilderness? Jesus answered the question with another: "How many loaves have ye?", and bade his disciples use what already was with them. He blessed it and gave to his disciples, the disciples gave to the multitude, and it sufficed to feed all. Not otherwise did he use the religion of his day to satisfy spiritual hunger.

He took the Law. And who listened thought they knew what the Law meant. It stood for an arid, impersonal code, made yet more difficult and complicated by the mass of rabbinic traditions. It stood for a disheartening series of prohibitions. It stood for a system which identified righteousness with external observances and abstentions. It stood for a kind of religion which satisfied the Pharisees and proved an intolerable burden to ordinary folk. But how different the Law seemed when Jesus had expounded it! So far from overthrowing it, he gave it a far greater importance than before. He revealed it as no mere code, but as the voice of the living God. From the mere letter its

province was extended to the realms of the spirit. It touched the heart, the will, and the conscience. It dominated motives and desires, not outward actions only. Fasting and almsgiving, in place of being mere ritual observances, became deeds of filial service. Prayer was no longer an imposed ceremony; it became the language of a child speaking to his Father. Those who listened to the teaching of Jesus felt that never before had they understood the real worth and power and constraining appeal of the Law. Never had they seen it thus, fraught with divine wisdom, and radiant with love.

As thus he filled the Law with new meaning, so also he fulfilled the message of the prophets. They, and the apocalyptic writers after them, had looked forward to the kingdom of God. The near approach of that kingdom had been the ground of the Baptist's call to repentance. The kingdom of God was a phrase with which every Jew was familiar. But the interpretations of it varied. Many linked it with a political revolt against Rome.

Others thought of it as it was pictured in the apocalyptic visions, as coming with an end of the existing age, heralded by angels and trumpets and mystic signs, and with the revelation of God enthroned for judgment. Jesus also used and adapted to his purpose the apocalyptic writings, and this looking forward to a final manifestation and judgment is specially prominent in the Matthæan account of his teaching. But, as he interpreted the phrase, "the kingdom of God" meant also something far more immediate. It meant the reign of God in human souls and the union of those who combined to do his bidding. To the people who came to him, "the kingdom of God" had represented a political programme, or a mystical vision, or a blend of the two. But to the people who had heard him it was spiritual, not political, in its character; it was of the present, and not of the future only, in its setting. The idea was so great and pervasive that Jesus himself could not easily set forth its full significance. He used one illustration after

another in order to reveal some of its many aspects. No single parable could express more than a part of its rich comprehensiveness. Yet at least his hearers understood that to lead, individually and socially, the kind of life he described and to gain the character he depicted, was to find a place, here and now, in the kingdom of God. Again Jesus proved himself the revealer. Again he had taken a term with which they were familiar, and astonished them by showing what power and inspiration it contained.

V

Thus we can readily understand the vast impression Jesus made in Galilee, and the attractiveness of his teaching. It revealed God, and life, and religion as they had never been seen before. Legalism had proved a hopeless creed, but Jesus justified love of the Law when he disclosed in it the law of love. He changed the prophetic Kingdom of God from a vague aspiration to a present reality. God had been conceived as an inexorable

judge, or even as an unimaginable pedant—for some of the rabbis gravely affirmed that God spent three hours daily in studying the Law! Now He was made known as a Father who cared for each individual soul, who took thought for even the lowliest of created things.

We cannot suppose, of course, that the full richness and implications of such teaching were evident at once. The first feeling it stirred was bewilderment. Its hearers were "exceedingly amazed," to quote the frank record of the evangelists. How, indeed, should they not be? This new revelation was utterly unlike the authorized teaching they had received from other rabbis since their earliest days. We, on the other hand, inured to Christian thought by centuries of tradition, find it hard to recapture that sense of novelty, do not easily realize the shock which almost every sentence of Christian doctrine held for its audience by the Sea of Galilee or in the synagogue of Capernaum. Yet eager multitudes were convinced by this

"new teaching" of the strange rabbi. And none were unmoved.

For there is a further point which, in even the briefest summary, must not be overlooked. To reveal God and His Kingdom to man was not all that the teaching of Jesus did. It did something more; it revealed man to himself. No doubt mere curiosity first drew from their homes the crowds that streamed from all parts to hear this rabbi, of whose doctrine such strange rumours had reached them. But, as they listened, perhaps almost every man and woman of them experienced two sensations in turn. The first was an uncomfortable dissatisfaction. Conscience awoke. The accustomed standards were shown to be false. These searching enquiries into hidden motive, this new force given to the old commandments, stirred a deep sense of failure. Yet, hard upon this sense of past failure followed a marvellous hope of future achievement. The quiet, persuasive voice to which they listened had a strange power. Beyond

question, this rabbi knew what was in man. His appeal was based on human knowledge and experience: "What man of you" was a recurrent phrase in it. But he did not merely make them conscious of their shortcomings, or picture a new and noble kind of life, built upon a direct relationship with God. Not merely did he do this, but he insisted that his ideal was eminently practicable. He discerned in them powers and possibilities with which they had never dared to credit themselves. He made them feel strong. As they listened, these ordinary men and women were compelled to believe in themselves, because this teacher, with his unquestionable knowledge of human nature, so evidently believed in them.

Thus this ministry of teaching began and went on. The strain it imposed on the teacher must have been enormous. Every day was full, and it is evident that the public discourses were supplemented both by more detailed expositions given to the increasing body of disciples and by private interviews,

of which a few only are recorded. St. Mark describes with some completeness a sabbath day in Capernaum, on the eve of a tour to other places. It began with long teaching at the synagogue service. Then a man "with an unclean spirit" was cured. After leaving the synagogue, Jesus and his disciples went to Simon's house. He was told that Simon's mother-in-law had fallen ill; at his touch "the fever left her, and she ministered unto them." A few hours later, as the shadows lengthened, a vast number of ailing folk were brought to the house, "and all the city was gathered together at the door." Again he healed and taught. It must have been late before he was able to get any rest. Yet in the morning, "a great while before day," he rose up, "and went out and departed into a desert place, and there prayed. And Simon and they that were with him followed after him. And they found him, and said unto him: All are seeking thee." So, with cheerful readiness, he began the next day's work, which marked the beginning of a short

tour away from Capernaum. "Let us go elsewhere into the next towns," he said, "that I may preach there also, for to this end came I forth." And so "he went into their synagogues throughout all Galilee."

Yet, despite their toil, these were happy days. Jesus was accompanied, not merely by his few intimate friends, but by an increasing number of disciples, content to leave for a time all their normal occupations in order to be with him and hear his words. In their lives he could see his influence at work. Beyond them, again, were the great multitudes. As yet many of them may have understood but little, yet all were eager to learn. The hostility of the official religious leaders had not yet declared itself, and the time for challenging the world by a proclamation of Messiahship was not yet come. Enough for the present that the rabbi taught and the people listened. Of much concerning him they were ignorant, of much were doubtful. But that never man spake as this man they were increasingly sure.

CHAPTER IV

THE TEACHING BY DEED

I

It is evident that Jesus was not satisfied by the mere outward success of his work in Galilee. Crowds came to hear him, and hung eagerly upon his words, and felt their power. But how far was their true meaning understood? How far was their effect transient? How far would the hearers not only listen with approval and interest, but adopt the teaching as their rule of life? Jesus knew the fickleness of human nature; he knew how many "when they have heard the word, straightway receive it with joy, but have no root in themselves." And the danger of achieving merely superficial results was increased when he began to travel from place to place. So long as he was con-

tinually in one synagogue, teaching the same people day after day, and living in the same town with them, he could explain special points that had perplexed them, he could insist in detail upon the practical consequences which acceptance of his doctrine must involve, and he could keep in personal touch with many at least of his hearers.

Conditions were changed when he left Capernaum and toured through the towns and villages. In each place his stay was brief. In each place he faced a new audience. The risk in these conditions was inevitably greater that the people who flocked to hear him would be charmed by a unique personality, would listen with wonder, interest, and enthusiasm to his message, but would not be much influenced by it in any practical way when he had departed elsewhere. Yet his aim was to touch not their emotions or their intellect so much as their will. Abstract doctrine was what they expected from a rabbi. A large proportion of rabbinical instruction was devoted to exam-

ining general principles in relation with hypothetical cases of conduct. What commandments should be ranked among the "greater," and what among the "less"? Supposing a pious Jew found himself in this or the other imagined position, which of two plausible courses would the Law, interpreted by tradition, direct him to take? Supposing, again, that the Law seemed to enjoin a moral duty—such as the support of aged parents—which proved inconvenient, by what device of casuistry—such as that of pleading "Corban"—could the duty be evaded? Of such themes the rabbis discoursed almost interminably. They won applause by their dialectical ingenuity in dealing with abstract cases, by their hair-splitting distinctions and dialectical sophistries.

Jesus had to convince a large audience in a short time that, though he appeared to them as a rabbi, his purpose was different. He was unconcerned with abstract doctrines. He set forward new interpretations both of the Law and of the prophetic message, but

only that his hearers might apply these interpretations in practical conduct. He disclosed the true force of the Law in order that it should be made a rule of life. He revealed the true idea of the Kingdom in order that people should make themselves fit for places within it. And therefore to emphasize his doctrine, to make it yet more vivid, and to show it in action, as he travelled through Galilee he supplemented his teaching by word with teaching by deed.

II

For example, we may consider his instruction about the sabbath. This was a subject on which he spoke often during the first year of his ministry. Indeed, it was one concerning which he must have had to answer frequent questions. If many of the rabbinic doctrines were remote from the ordinary life of the ordinary Jew, here was one which must needs affect him in a very practical way. Once a week the sabbath came round, and once a week he must either obey or evade

the prescribed rules for its observance. They were extraordinarily complicated. On no subject had more rabbinic ingenuity been expended. On no subject was there a wider gulf between the simple directions of the original Law, and the elaborate traditions which ultimately superseded it. The literature on the subject was voluminous. Two or three of the rabbinic interpretations will show the type of rules they made and distinctions they drew. When the disciples walking through a cornfield on the sabbath plucked ears of wheat, such action was classified as "work," and therefore was held to involve grave sin. A woman might not look in a mirror on the sabbath. If she did, she might notice a grey hair and be tempted to pluck it out. This, again, would be work, and sinful. Healing also was work. An injured man might apply a bandage to his wound on the sabbath provided that the bandage was intended only to prevent the wound from growing worse. If, however, the bandage was employed to effect a cure

—if, for instance, it contained any remedial ointment—then its application on a sabbath was a heinous sin.

Such inept sophistries, as St. Mark records, stirred Jesus to "anger." He exposed their falsity with remorseless logic. By appeals to common-sense he proved that it was "lawful" to do good on the sabbath-day. He demolished the whole cumbrous mass of tradition by his incontestable principle that the sabbath was made for man, not man for the sabbath. Yet no verbal argument, however convincing, could proclaim his doctrine so forcibly as could action. Therefore he taught by deed also what his views were. In the synagogue on a sabbath day was a man with a withered hand. In the sight of all the people Jesus healed him. Thereby he put his own views beyond question, and illustrated them in a way which none could disregard.

Soon he made his works of healing an essential part of his ministry. They were far more than incidental works of compas-

sion. They were a designed part of his teaching; the healing and the preaching were closely linked. The Matthæan Gospel thus summarizes the work in Galilee: "He went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of disease and all manner of sickness." Later, Jesus committed the same dual ministry to his apostles. In St. Luke's words, "he gave them power and authority over all devils and to cure diseases. And he sent them forth to preach the kingdom of God, and to heal the sick." We may ask why Jesus attached so evident an importance to this work of healing. In part, no doubt, he did it from simple compassion for human suffering. He could not look unmoved on misery; he rejoiced to bestow happiness.

Yet by itself this explanation does not seem adequate. There must have been further reasons for placing the work of healing on the same rank as the work of preaching. Its results were necessarily transient, for

those whom Jesus cured must again, sooner or later, fall ill, and suffer, and die. Yet, in another sense, its influence was to endure. Apart from the temporary relief given to the sick, it contributed to the permanent legacy of teaching, and chiefly by establishing the spiritual authority of the teacher. There was a day when Jesus had said to a paralytic, "thy sins be forgiven thee," and some of the bystanders, naturally enough, questioned his right to use these astounding words. But Jesus promptly justified his claim to heal the soul by demonstrating his power to cure the body: "That ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins," he said, "Arise, and take up thy bed, and go unto thy house." No other demonstration could have been so swiftly convincing. "Amazement took hold on all," comments the evangelist, "and they glorified God; and they were filled with fear, saying, We have seen strange things to-day."

Thus the works of healing were teaching by deed. Power shown in the material and

visible region of life made easier belief concerning power in the spiritual and invisible region of the soul.

III

And the unseen world, as the Jews of this age conceived it, included armies of spirits, both good and evil. To the evil spirits, led by Beelzebub, were attributed insanity, epilepsy, and various other maladies. To effect a cure, therefore, it was necessary to "cast out" the evil spirit. Jesus himself had been educated in that belief, and there is no sign that he ever abandoned it. Indeed, there are still bewildering cases for which some alienists and psychologists would admit that the theory of "demoniacal possession" is at least as good an explanation as any other. In any event, moreover, it would have been contrary to the methods of Jesus had he diverted attention from his real purpose by attempting to recast the medical knowledge of his day. Ever he sought to concentrate attention on the essential truths

he had come to proclaim. But, accepting the theory of evil spirits, he used it as a chance of showing that the divine power flowing through him could conquer evil. His opponents, unable to deny the cures he wrought, fell back upon the plea that he cast out devils "by Beelzebub, the chief of the devils." With swift logic Jesus demolished that argument. Evil would not cast out evil, else would it be a kingdom divided against itself, which could not stand. "But if I by the spirit of God cast out devils, then is the kingdom of God come upon you." These words help us again to realize that this exorcism of evil spirits was not only a work of compassion but a designed and definite part of the teaching. As Jesus came to each town or village, by word he proclaimed "the kingdom of God"; by deed he showed that "the kingdom of God is come upon you."

In yet another way, we may believe, the works of healing were employed to illustrate visibly a point of doctrine. There was—and, indeed, there is still—a view which attempted

to solve the problem of physical evil by accepting disease as an ordinance of God, meant to serve as a punishment for sin or as a wholesome discipline. That view, we shall remember, is the theme debated in the noble drama of the Book of Job. Jesus did not concern himself with any abstract discussion of the problem, a discussion which could only have bemused his simple hearers. When the disciples asked, "Rabbi, who did sin, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" Jesus was content to answer, "Neither did this man sin nor his parents, but that the works of God should be made manifest in him"—and therewith gave the blind man sight. Then only was the man as God meant him, was God's handiwork recognizable in him. In certain instances Jesus recognized that sin and suffering were closely linked as cause and effect, when "go, and sin no more" would be his word to the healed. But sin and suffering alike were foreign to God's design, and against both, by word and deed, he waged incessant war. Preaching and

healing, and by both these means teaching, Jesus journeyed through Galilee.

Not only did he combat resolutely both disease and sin, but—a fact yet more significant—he viewed sin as he viewed disease. He hated its foulness. But he regarded it as something extrinsic to man, something that, like disease, had thrust itself in and made havoc of God's design. Just as the normal man should be the man healthy in body, so the normal man was he whose will, strengthened by divine power, should be immune against the attempted dominance of moral ill. The good man was not man changed into a being abnormal and inhuman; the good man was the true man, the man himself cleansed from what was foreign to his best nature. That was the source of his unconquerable optimism about characters which others thought hopelessly degraded. That was why no moral failure on the part of his friends could ever make him despair of them. That was why to a group of very ordinary folk, acutely conscious of the gulf

between the ideals he pictured and their own ways of living, he could give with tranquil confidence the amazing command, "Be ye perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect."

Again he enforced this doctrine by deed as well as by word. In Palestine were some people adjudged by all respectable folk to be quite beyond the pale; moral and social outcasts with whom no self-respecting Jew could be on terms of friendship. Such were the "publicans," men employed by the Roman government to collect the customs on exports levied in the province of Palestine. The system under which they worked encouraged dishonesty. Often the publican paid down a fixed sum to Rome for his tenure of office, and then proceeded to reimburse himself, with something over, by the sums he collected. By false representations, threats, and blackmail it would be easy for him to exact from uneducated people amounts far in excess of those for which they were liable under the legal rates of tariff. But

even if he fulfilled its duties with comparative honesty, the very office which a publican held earned him the contempt and hatred of his fellow-countrymen. That a Jew for the sake of lucre should assist in collecting the revenue demanded by the abominated power of Rome seemed insufferable. Hence as a rule the only persons willing to undertake this detested work were men of no character, who already had been in trouble and therefore found themselves unable to get other employment. The publican, in short, was deemed a traitor to his nation and his religion.

Not less contemptible, in the accepted view, were the folk known as "sinners." They were men and women who had abandoned their places among God's chosen people, mixing with Gentiles and eating their food, taking no part in public worship and openly defying the Law. They formed a kind of underworld, and among them were many women who lived on the wages of immorality.

Probably nothing that Jesus said and did

so staggered the religious people of his day as his attitude towards these classes, the publicans and the "sinners." He came before the people of his time, it must be remembered, as a rabbi. He was accepted as one of their authorized religious teachers, whose main task was to uphold and expound the Law. When he began a story about a Pharisee and a publican, the listeners would nod approvingly. They knew well both types; the Pharisee—the man "separated," as the name means, from the crowd by his superior "righteousness," by his punctilious observance of the Law; and the publican, the irreligious and unpatriotic renegade. Conceive, then, the limitless astonishment at the ending of the story, at the emphatic declaration that the publican was justified rather than the Pharisee!

But the deeds were as startling and as decisive as the words. Of the men whom Jesus chose to be his closest companions, one was a publican. Then he became this man's guest, "and it came to pass that he

was sitting at meat in his house, and many publicans and sinners sat down with Jesus and his disciples." The ordinary religious-minded Jew, though he was no Pharisee or rigorist, would be aghast at the idea of eating with publicans and sinners. In this striking and dramatic way, more vividly even than by his words, Jesus insisted that the kingdom he proclaimed was open to all, and that his appeal was more likely to reach the "sinners" who desired amendment and a real religion than the self-satisfied "righteous," content with mere external obedience to a code. But the spectacle of a rabbi not merely deigning to speak with, but sitting at tables with publicans and sinners, was not less than astounding.

Equally significant, and equally unconventional, was the attitude of Jesus on another occasion, most vividly pictured by St. Luke. On this day, by way of contrast, Jesus was the guest, not of a publican, but of a Pharisee. Yet this Pharisee had

omitted those acts of courtesy which were due to a guest on his arrival. Then, as they reclined at meat, "a woman which was in the city, a sinner," stole in through the open door. She must have listened to Jesus as he taught in Capernaum; likely enough, he had spoken to her apart, had urged her to quit her miserable trade. She had listened yearning yet reluctant; and, at the last, had turned away to brood over his haunting words. And now her decision is made. Hearing that he is dining with Simon the Pharisee, she creeps in, unnoticed by the slaves. She carries an alabaster phial of perfume—a part, perhaps, of her tragic earnings, the gift of one of her so many lovers. In a moment, before any has realised her presence, she is at the feet of Jesus, whom she sees dimly through her tears. Her hands go swiftly to her head; it is held by the Jews a shameful thing that a woman should let down her hair in public; but what does she care for that? And then, "weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears, and wiped

them with the hair of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them." The company were aghast. The host said nothing, but his face revealed his thought: "This man, if he were a prophet, would have perceived who and what manner of woman this is which toucheth him, that she is a sinner." It is needless to re-tell at length the rest of the familiar story—the rebuke, as delicate as unanswerable, given to the Pharisee, the word pardoning the "many sins" of the woman, "for she loved much"—whereat the guests whispered "who is this that even forgiveth sins?"—and the heartening farewell which bade her enter into peace. It is one of those scenes—and the Gospels abound with them—which scarcely the greatest literary genius could have invented, or, having invented, could have told with such vivid simplicity. But the point which concerns us here is to note how the deeds of Jesus helped the words to set forth his teaching, and how startling to the thought of his age his doctrine was. It was not the product

of evolution. It was not a purified or humanized Judaism, a Judaism reaching a higher standard than any previously attained. It was wholly different. It was, to repeat once more that pregnant comment of its first hearers, "a new teaching."

IV

When we are considering the teaching given by deed, our minds are apt to turn specially to those acts of supra-normal power commonly known as "miracles." Yet it is easy to place too great emphasis upon them, or at least emphasis of a mistaken kind. It is true that they form an integral part of the Gospels, being so woven into the text that any effort to separate them, and to conceive the miracles as interpolations of later times, proves hopelessly impossible. Beyond all question, the first three Gospels were written within the lifetime of many who had witnessed the events described, and it is noteworthy that miracles are far more numerous in the first three than they are in the

Fourth Gospel, the publication of which belongs to a much later date. Again, if any reader will study the earliest Gospel, that of St. Mark, and then face the suggestion that all the supra-normal works, done on the scale and with the publicity there described, were simply imagined by the disciples, and that nothing like them ever happened, he will quickly feel that such a theory involves difficulties greater than those it is intended to remove.

On the other hand, we cannot but notice how fully the use made by Jesus of supra-normal powers accords with the decisions to which he won through in the wilderness. Jesus will never use these powers for his own glory, or for the sake of making a sensation. He refuses entirely to employ them when challenged by curious sight-seers. Of some thirty-five miracles[1] sepa-

[1] The number cannot be given with precision, because it is occasionally uncertain whether two stories in two Gospels describe separate incidents, or whether they describe the same incident with some slight differences of setting or detail.

rately recorded in the Gospels, no fewer than twenty-eight are works of healing. To these must be added a vast number of others, not separately specified, but collectively included in such a statement as that, journeying through a certain district, he "healed all manner of disease." Probably we may assume safely that nine-tenths at least of the "miracles" were deeds of healing. Of the few others that are described, most were worked to meet some special need, such as the feeding of a hungry multitude, or stilling of a storm at a moment of acute danger. We have noted already how quietly, yet effectively, the miracles were used to illustrate and enforce the teaching. They seem, if the word be allowed, to come naturally from Jesus. They are as different as possible from spectacular deeds such as imagination might have attributed to him.

Yet unquestionably they imply the possession of supra-normal powers. Some of the works of healing can be assigned to psycho-therapeutic means which we need no

longer view as miraculous. But this cannot be said of all, such as the cleansing from leprosy, or, again, of other miracles such as the stilling of a storm. Not one was "contrary to nature," unless we interpret nature in terms of purely mechanical causation. The miracles do imply, however, knowledge, and consequent powers, more than normal man has yet attained, or the interaction of the spiritual factor in ways beyond our present understanding.

But when all has been said—and there is material here, of course, not merely for a few lines of summary, but for volumes of abstruse discussion—we may repeat that this question of the miracles is often given a wrong importance, because it is seen in a wrong perspective. There are people who suppose the Gospels would be easier to accept were the supernatural element omitted from them. There are people who declare that they "believe in Jesus," yet doubt if they can "believe the stories of miracles." So they examine them again, and argue about evi-

dence, and causation, and "fixed laws of nature," probably finding themselves at the end in a rather dense fog. Well, that is inevitable. They have taken a wrong line. It is futile to attempt first to decide, as a separate issue, the question of the Gospel miracles, and thence to go on to consider belief in Jesus. That is to put things in their wrong order. If any reader of this page feels perplexed by this question of the miracles, here is the right course for him to take. Let him deliberately put that question aside for the present. It will answer itself later, and, relatively, it is quite unimportant. It is not what we believe about miracles that matters, but what we believe about Jesus. If we believe that Jesus was what he claimed to be, there will be little difficulty about the miracles. For instance, was a storm on the Sea of Galilee suddenly ended by natural causes, or by a spoken word? The answer depends, not on what we believe about storms, but on what we believe about him who was in the boat with his disciples.

His claims were explicit. They were not put into his mouth by later ages. In the first-written of the Gospels we find him confronted by Pilate's direct challenge: "Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?" And Jesus said, "I am." Was that overwhelming assertion true? If it was not true, the speaker was either an impostor or a self-deluded fanatic. If it was true, what cause have we to hesitate over the record that his word could end a storm? What might seem incredible would be the Christ with no powers transcending those of a merely human being. If that "I am" is false, then all Christianity is false. If that "I am" is true, then to stumble over stories of miracles, all less miraculous than himself, seems needless indeed. "Whom say ye that I am?" All turns on that. In order to reach a reasoned answer to the supreme question, it is worth while to study dispassionately again and again, as we are attempting to do in these pages, the evidence before us, the main incidents of his life, its setting, its character,

its impression upon those who witnessed it. Because that enquiry transcends in importance—and, in a sense, includes—all else, it would be unwise to turn aside from it in order to discuss at greater length the credibility of the "miracles."

V

We have seen, then, Jesus travelling through the northern province of Galilee as a rabbi, teaching in each place he visited, both by word and deed. We have seen that in its early stages his ministry was enormously successful. But in time there came a change. Opposition began to show itself, at first local and occasional in character, but afterwards definitely organized. Other teachers of religion observed with dismay the vast crowds that followed Jesus and his increasing influence upon them. Reports of the strange scenes witnessed and of the subversive doctrines which this rabbi was encouraging perturbed not merely the scribes attached to the synagogues of Galilee but

both Pharisees and Sadducees in Jerusalem itself. More than once they sent agents into the north country with instructions to bring back full reports about this new teacher, and his alleged popularity, and the nature of his instruction.

The unworthy motive of jealousy, powerful though it was, did not stand alone in causing opposition to Jesus. The news of his teaching, and most of all his teaching by deed, must have caused quite genuine pain and resentment among many of the most pious and educated people of the day. Unsatisfying as they must have felt legalism to be as a substitute for personal religion, they were fully convinced that it had divine sanction. They were sure, for instance, that to break the traditional rules about the sabbath was to offend God. Those who had come under the direct influence of Jesus, those who had heard his actual words and seen him face to face, had mostly found reason to change their views. Others, however, knew only by hearsay how, rabbi though

he was, he had defied what they accounted among the fundamental and most sacred rules of religion. We cannot wonder that they were scandalized. Other Jews, probably, were offended for reasons of a different kind. These were not particularly religious people. They were not greatly concerned whatever new teaching some new rabbi might give. Yet the line, they felt, must be drawn somewhere. And when a rabbi so far forgot what was due to his race and himself as to sit down at table with publicans and sinners, then it was high time for a protest to be made.

Feelings of that kind among the governing religious and social classes were bound to have their effect. Among the earliest results was the exclusion of Jesus from the synagogues. At first the rulers of these places had treated him with the deference due to a well-known rabbi, and had invited him to preach at the sabbath-day services. Now this opportunity was withheld, and all the teaching had to be given in private houses

or in the open air. Another result was that the leading people began to feel nervous about seeming to sympathize with a teacher whom the Pharisees and Sadducees had denounced. Consequently, they were more loth than they had been to show hospitality to Jesus and his companions, so that at least once Jesus "had not where to lay his head."

In addition to incurring the enmity of religious leaders and the suspicion of those whom such leaders influenced, Jesus found himself, as time went on, in increasing danger of political attack. He was in the territory of Herod Antipas, who had imprisoned the Baptist, and afterwards beheaded him. He and his advisers were greatly perturbed by the rumours that came to them of Jesus and his teaching. This talk of a "kingdom of God" seemed like the language of a revolutionary plotting against the rule of Herod. Moreover, after John's death there were stories that he had risen again in the person of Jesus, and the conscience of Antipas was ill at ease. Thus

Jesus was increasingly in danger of arrest. Already the political and religious factions were ready to make common cause against him. When he wrought one of his first deeds of healing on a sabbath, the Pharisees who watched it "went out and straightway with the Herodians took counsel against him, how they might destroy him."

Through such causes the conditions in which Jesus worked in Galilee became less favourable. It is true that wherever he taught, great multitudes still flocked to hear him. Deep was his love for them, and staunch their loyalty to him. Yet the very size of these crowds and their ardour often became an embarrassment. There were moments when he had to risk losing all their favour, because he disappointed them by refusing to proclaim himself the Christ, and would not head the national movement for which they looked. He had to resist forcible attempts to make him their king. Again, the crowds made it most difficult for him to secure those seasons of repose and solitude

and prayer which he found essential. Above all, it was impossible to be sure of any permanence for teaching given to varying multitudes. Jesus was, as he himself said, like a sower scattering seed broadcast, and but a very small proportion of it fell on good ground. Many listened from mere curiosity. Many understood little or nothing of the deeper meaning in what they heard. Many who understood something were influenced by it for a short time only. In view of these facts, Jesus had to reconsider his methods. The outward conditions had changed. Galilee was no longer a province in which he could work with security. So far he had left it, since the beginning of his ministry, only to attend periodically the great religious festivals in Jerusalem. But now he must be ready for sudden and forced retreats from it when the plots of his enemies became actively threatening.

Again, how was the effect of his teaching to be made permanent? How was its transmission still to be secured if, as the fate of

the Baptist and the attitude of Herod made too probable, Jesus himself should be arrested?

Here, then, was a new situation. Here were new dangers. Here were new problems. With serene wisdom Jesus set himself to meet them.

CHAPTER V

THE TEACHING BY CHARACTER

I

THE teaching of Jesus has two contrasting characteristics, of which its timeliness is one and its timelessness the other. In a sense it belongs, as we should expect, to a special age. It reflects the conditions and knowledge of that age. It is not abstract philosophy, spoken into space, but practical counsel given to men and women among whom the teacher lived. It abounds with homely illustrations drawn from their everyday affairs. There is a sense, then, in which it is vividly of the moment.

Yet, side by side with this, we find the other quality of permanence. Jesus seems to be conscious that he is addressing, not merely those about him, but the people of

all future ages. "Heaven and earth shall pass away," he declares, "but my words shall not pass away." Repeatedly what he says is shaped by the conviction that it will be eagerly consulted for guidance in far distant times. He is asked, for instance, some question that has arisen out of a trivial controversy of the day—perhaps a squabble between two brothers over an inheritance. He could answer in a way that would deal with that special case on its merits and serve well enough to end the dispute. Instead, he deals, not merely with the special case, but with large principles beneath it, and so gives teaching of abiding validity.

How, then, could he secure permanence for his message? At first he may have hoped for its acceptance by the official leaders of religion. But their jealous hostility soon showed that their one aim would be to discredit and suppress what Jesus taught. They clung to the political idea of the promised kingdom. The Sadducees adhered to belief in God as a deity who must be propitiated

by sacrifices. Their chief concern was to uphold the Temple and its system of worship, from which they derived power and wealth. The Pharisees would not modify their doctrine that righteousness began and ended with obedience to the Law as expanded by tradition. Jesus, on the other hand, interpreted God in terms of Fatherhood, interpreted the Kingdom in terms of faith and hope, interpreted the Law in terms of love. How was this Gospel to be spread? He knew that his personal ministry was precarious. There was a real risk that Herod's emissaries would arrest him and cut short his work. But, beyond that, lurked a more certain danger. The time would come when he must publicly proclaim himself the Messiah. Only too well he knew that this would intensify the bitterness of the official religious leaders against him. Inevitably also it must damp the enthusiasm of those who had persisted in thinking that, sooner or later, he would give the signal for political revolt. Jesus was under no illusion; throughout he

saw plainly that his announcement of Messiahship must doom him to death.

What chance would his teaching then have of survival? Individuals from the crowds might cherish and repeat such parts of it as they had heard, and those disciples who had journeyed with him from place to place would have a fuller store of memories. But there had been no chance as yet of giving even the disciples adequate instruction. They were a large and changing body, some of whom had been compelled to return to their ordinary work, and some after a while had taken offence at his doctrine, and "walked no more with him." The most he could hope was that for a time fragments of his message, imperfectly understood, would be preserved. As the years went on, their force would dwindle, and his teaching, both by word and deed, would linger as little more than a vague memory.

As ever when he had to make decisions of great importance, Jesus went apart for solitary prayer, and thus thought out the

course he should take. He had returned to Capernaum, and wandered alone into the hill country behind the town. "He went out into the mountain to pray," St. Luke writes, "and he continued all night in prayer to God." Nothing less than the whole future of his Gospel was at stake. When the morning came, his resolve was formed. From the large company of disciples he would summon twelve; "whom he himself would," in St. Mark's phrase, "that they might be with him and that he might send them forth to preach." Henceforward he would concentrate upon teaching and training these twelve. When occasion served, he would still welcome the multitudes, and speak in their hearing words of counsel and warning and encouragement. Yet this would be no longer his chief task. In place of teaching a great many people a little, he would devote himself to teaching a few people a great deal. Yet always he would cause them to regard what they learnt, not as an esoteric secret, given for their own learning and profit alone,

but as a message committed to them in order that later they might transmit it to others. This little group was to form the nucleus of a society, intended ultimately to include Jew and Gentile alike. Within this society could be practised those virtues of love and service which lay near the basis of his creed. Its members would help and reinforce one another. They would embody, as it were, his doctrine of a spiritual kingdom. Very soon he would send out the twelve to preach and minister. Thus from the beginning they would be guarded against imagining wrongly that what they heard was to remain their own secret. Thus, too, they would have practice in the work while it was still possible for them to come back and "tell him all things, both what they had done and what they had taught." So they would be trained to carry on his work in years to come, when he was no longer to be seen among them. From them, too, others would learn to teach, and thus the perpetuation of his message would be secured.

II

Because so much depended on them, we cannot doubt that the choice of the twelve was made with most deliberate care. Among them were the four fishermen who probably accompanied Jesus when he joined the Baptist and remained for some time among the disciples of John. But it is not easy to find any one quality, beyond a common love of the master and a common willingness to learn from him, distinguishing all the twelve. Rather it seems that they were chosen for their diversity, and as if Jesus wished to demonstrate that no special temperament or type of character was needed for those who were to be his followers. The eminently sane man of affairs, the pessimist, the quick-tempered and impulsive man, the thoughtful and contemplative man—such were some of the twelve. They included also an ex-publican, the professional agent of the Roman government, and an ex-"zealot," a member, that is, of an organ-

ization sworn to overthrow the Roman rule. This (to take an analogy from modern times) was much as though an Orangeman and a Sinn Feiner had been brought into close companionship. That both Matthew the publican and Simon the Zealot were of the twelve is a fact which helps us to realize the compelling power of Jesus.

Finally, we may suppose he wished to show that this chosen company was not limited to those who, like himself, were Galilæans. Therefore he took one of the twelve from southern Palestine. This was Judas *ish-Kerioth,* or "Iscariot," which means "a man of Kerioth," in Judæa. It was like joining one Devonian with eleven Yorkshiremen. A bold experiment; was there from the first some lack of sympathy between the eleven and the one? Yet the venture was deliberate, and made, we may suppose, because Jesus discerned in Iscariot great possibilities of good and also of evil. To keep this man near himself and to give him a new sense of responsibility as one of

the twelve was to provide him with his best chance. A venture, certainly, but a venture which might save a soul, and from a venture which might do that it was not the habit of Jesus to shrink. For a time, too, it seemed successful; we should remember that Judas, like the other apostles, was sent forth to preach and cast out devils, and did so with marked effect, and returned "with great joy."

This striking and decisive step, the appointment of the twelve apostles, had at least one result beyond those we have noticed already. It enabled Jesus the teacher to develop his teaching in a new way. Living more apart from the multitudes than he had done, concentrating his attention upon the training of the twelve, he would continue to teach them, as he had taught the larger body of disciples and the mixed crowds who gathered about him, both by word and by deed. But, in addition to those means of instruction, his new manner of life enabled him fully to employ for the first time another

means, in a sense the most powerful of all. Living daily in intimate companionship with the twelve, he taught them, not only by word and deed, but by character. We may even say that he taught them less by what he did and said than by what he was. No doubt his wonderful personality had impressed even casual listeners, and helped to gain an eager audience for his doctrine. Yet such a glimpse of it, or even the fuller knowledge that came to the general company of disciples, could not approach the revelation bestowed on this little group of private friends. It was much to hear, as they alone heard, the Teacher's own explanation of his parables. It was much to see, as they alone saw, some of his most striking and significant actions. But it was more to be with him, day after day, to be given his confidence, to watch, in every change of circumstance, his unchanging self. And what they learnt in this way was also to be a part of the message which afterwards they were to transmit to the world at large.

III

What, we may ask, were the characteristics of Jesus which specially impressed these men who saw him daily, at close range? We can derive our answers from the records which they bequeathed, for these were embodied later in the written Gospels which have come down to us. And first, beyond question, was the unstained holiness of their master. It was not merely a public view that they had of him. They saw him in the intimate little affairs of life, they saw him when things went wrong in an irritating fashion, they "continued with him," as he himself testified, "in his temptations"—not merely crucial moments of great trial, but the lesser temptations of ordinary life. And never once did his practice fall below his precept. Like Pilate, though in a sense far wider, those who were with him continually could "find no fault in this man." Of any other it may be said that in proportion with moral growth grows the sense of imperfec-

tion, and of the need of asking forgiveness. Yet Jesus, praying often that others might be forgiven, and commending those who so prayed, was never heard to ask forgiveness for himself. Never had he to lament anything done amiss or any opportunity unused as he looked back on his life. And the teaching given thus by character made luminous the teaching by word. All the hearers, accustomed to the traditional interpretation of "righteousness," were astounded when Jesus told them that they could not enter the kingdom of heaven unless their righteousness exceeded that of the Pharisees—for the Pharisees, punctiliously observing the traditions, alone attained righteousness as the Jews understood it. To exceed their righteousness seemed impracticable indeed. But then the flawless character of Jesus demonstrated what righteousness meant as he used the word, and for the apostles this new meaning swept away the old.

This holiness, this absolute purity of their master, filled the twelve with a sense of awe.

Easy and intimate as was much of their conversation with him, there were moments when they were almost overwhelmed by the consciousness of supernatural power. That was the feeling which expressed itself instinctively in Peter's cry, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!" And that was the feeling which made them accept without demur the amazing personal claims inherent in the teaching of Jesus. Apart from his unique character, they would have seemed, in some instances, intolerably arrogant, and, in others, the language of dementia. Our own familiarity with them may easily make us forget what they involve. They do not consist of a few exceptional words spoken in some passing mood of exaltation. They are not an occasional sentence which could have been interpolated in the Gospels, nor, indeed, are they such as anyone could have imagined. They are tranquil sayings pervading the Gospels throughout, and they form the basis on which the entire teaching of Jesus stands. If on

such a point we distrust, as of comparatively late date, the evidence of the Fourth Gospel, we can find words startling enough on almost every page of the earlier three. Jesus sweeps aside the whole religious system of his age with no argument beyond a mere "but I say unto you." To be like one whose house is built on a rock, he adds, a man must hear and obey his words. He claims the power to forgive sins. He says of himself that one greater than Solomon or Jonah is here. He bids the weary at heart, not to turn to God, but to "come unto me, and I will give you rest." He states that "he that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me." He promises to all who have left kindred possessions for his sake an hundredfold more in this world, "and in the world to come life everlasting." He says that all power has been given to him, "in heaven and on earth."

The real character of such utterances—and many more examples from the first three Gospels could be added—must be faced. Was

their speaker no more than a wonderfully good man? On the contrary, any mere man who had spoken them would not deserve to be called good. He would have been a grotesque egotist, of whom it would be charitable to suppose that he had lost his reason. Yet the words come from Jesus with a calm inevitableness. It is idle to admire the "beauty of his moral teaching" and to ignore these staggering claims, for the claims are an integral part of the teaching, are indeed the primary assumptions on which it is based. And they who listened felt that even the loftiest of such claims fell naturally from the lips of Jesus. For all their marvel, there seemed no incongruity between his language and his character. We cannot wonder that an increasing sense of awe possessed the apostles as, day by day, they listened to the serene teaching of their master. Who in truth was he? So the doubtful whispers began to pass from one to another. They had fancied they knew all about him. He was Jesus of Nazareth, an ex-carpenter

who had taken up the profession of a rabbi. He was a most attractive if bewildering teacher. He was a wonderfully sympathetic friend. He had a surprising knowledge of human nature. He could work marvellous cures.

Yes, but any such account of him no longer sufficed. Intimacy is apt to lessen the sense of awe, but they found that the longer they lived with Jesus the more this sense of awe increased. Jesus of Nazareth —yes, but what else? The promised Christ? He had refused to come forward as the Messiah, and fled from the crowds who would have forced him into leadership. And yet. . . . There were times when Jesus withdrew himself from the twelve for solitary thought and prayer. Then we can imagine how eagerly they discussed this question among themselves, how different would be the answers of Peter and Thomas, how John would brood much but say little; how suddenly the hot debate would be hushed as the returning figure of Jesus was discerned.

Day by day, though, they were being taught by his character, that character of which his words, even the most stupendous, were no more than the direct and undistorting expression.

Apart from this supernatural holiness and authority, there were qualities in Jesus which must have impressed deeply these men living in close companionship with him. Such, for example, was his courage. No threats and no adverse circumstances could divert him from his purpose. Again, it would have been easy for him, and many would have deemed it an act of wise prudence, to conciliate the civil and ecclesiastical authorities. The chances of his success as a preacher would have greatly increased, from the world's point of view, had he at least abstained from denouncing the powerful Pharisees and the wealthy Sadducees. Yet he who showed himself so gentle and compassionate to the humblest or most sin-stained of the folk who sought his aid, would make not the slightest compromise with the im-

penitent in high places, could speak the most scathing denunciation the world has ever heard. He was wholly without fear. And though his heart was wrung often by the ingratitude and faithlessness of those for whom he laboured, though there must have been dark seasons when the temptation to abandon his task was strong, through all such tests his courage brought him through triumphantly.

IV

Closely linked with this courage was his optimism. This was derived from an absolute faith in his heavenly Father, and a complete certainty about the Father's power and love. The simple folk who lived with Jesus were not of a kind to indulge in philosophical speculations. Yet they, like all other human beings, had to face at times the great problems of existence. Jesus himself was brought into touch with such problems by daily experience. An optimistic view of life may be attained not seldom by those who

themselves are sheltered, have little cause for anxiety, and are seldom in touch with the more grim and sordid aspects of human existence. But the life of Jesus was spent in very different circumstances. His own fierce conflicts with temptation, and his knowledge of the havoc wrought in the world by sin, constrained him to face the problem of moral evil. With physical evil, often in its most loathsome forms, he was brought into touch constantly, as he set himself to heal the sick, as a concourse of marred and agonized sufferers awaited him in each place he visited.

Yet for him—and the fact is of immeasurable significance—all the world seemed radiant with the Father's love. He found evidence of it throughout the countryside: the birds and the flowers sang this message to him. Not the suffering he had to witness, or that, of body and mind, which he himself had to undergo, or the warfare in the natural world, could dim his certainty. This was for him not a matter for argument, but the

primary fact of existence, a fact so plain that he marvelled at the blindness of those who failed to discern it—this fact that God is a Father who cares in tender love for all that he has made, who hears all prayer, who supplies all need. And always to his companions the character of Jesus, with its utter consecration to doing the Father's will, must have confirmed his doctrine of the Fatherhood.

Again, they needs must have been impressed by his optimism concerning man. He knew, they admitted, what was in man. He knew man's weakness, mixed motives, gross desires. He knew what human cruelty and baseness could accomplish. He knew, and was saddened by the knowledge, how inconstant had proved many who for a time had walked as his disciples. Yet his belief in man's possibilities was unshaken. He had shown it afresh by entrusting the future of his Gospel to the twelve. He had welcomed as friends many whom the respectable opinion of his time would not even recognize as

acquaintances. In after years, when the apostles had themselves to work among people of all conditions, we may surmise how often intolerance was checked and charity made easier through a remembrance of the lessons taught them by the character of Jesus.

This optimism concerning God and man brought him a serene composure, a detachment from ordinary cares which to his close friends must have been one of the strongest, as it was among the most surprising, features of his character. It was a new kind of detachment. It had little in common with asceticism. The Baptist, to take an obvious contrast, had deliberately cut himself off from the normal pleasures and solaces of human existence. He was an ascetic in dress, in habits, in food. But Jesus was no ascetic; indeed, his frank enjoyment of social pleasures caused his enemies to traduce him as "a gluttonous man and a wine-bibber." He preached no social revolution. Men who were rich and used their possessions wisely he praised. Riches were of no importance

in themselves, but they provided a test of character, and those who were remiss in their use of even "that which is least" were scarcely fit to be entrusted with "the true riches." Men who were enslaved by their riches he blamed and warned. They were imperilling their souls, and what should a man give in exchange for his soul? The man who was mastered by worldly possessions, instead of being their master, would be wise to cut himself free from this bondage at all costs, and to part with everything he had. The poor were happy in being exempt from the temptations of wealth, the power of which Jesus recognized. Too often they thwarted the growth of that type of character which could find a place in the divine kingdom. Yet such dangers could be overcome; with God's help all things were possible.

In themselves, then, according to this view, riches simply did not matter. Their effect upon character must be watched, for character mattered supremely. Otherwise

they, and all such material things, were unimportant. If they were given, let them be used well or renounced. If they were withheld, let not their absence be deplored. These were not the things in life that counted for much, one way or another. "Happy are the detached," said Jesus—such seems to be the force of the phrase "poor in spirit"—and he set forth this virtue of detachment by example. His companions must have been continually impressed and taught by his serene composure. He was never "anxious for the morrow." Equally he took things as they came. He did not despise either material comfort or social happiness; he was willing enough to be a guest at a wedding or a dinner. But when his popularity with the well-to-do waned, when he had to undergo hardship, and often was in personal danger, he was by no means discomfited. He was gloriously detached, and exempt from those haunting worries which do so much to make many human lives ineffective.

If such an attitude was not gained by asceticism, still less was it due to indifference. No sympathies were so alert as those of Jesus, none were more acutely conscious of the mingled joys and sorrows of life. His detachment from much that most people think of primary importance sprang from the fact that he himself held, and tried to impress upon his disciples, a new set of values. It was not easy to make others accept them. His adherence to them vastly increased the difficulty of his work. Even now, perhaps, we have not adopted that scale of values for our own normal use. It regarded life from a new point of view, and ranged its details in a new order of importance. That, for instance, which the Pharisees accounted extreme righteousness, was not held by Jesus to be of any worth in God's sight, while he treated as venial some sins which they deemed beyond pardon. All existence he interpreted in terms of spiritual, not physical, life; all duty he saw in a new sense as the loving service of God and

man. What men termed death was but an incident in the unbroken life. The only death to be feared was the death of the soul, and against this all who set themselves resolutely to obey his teaching would be made immune. He had come to lead man into this true life, a life of which the test was not a beating heart but a will pulsing in tune with the will of God.

"A new teaching" indeed! We set it beside the arid creed of legalism, which all the Jews of this period had been taught from their earliest years. And so we realize better the immense task of Jesus in trying to make a group of quite ordinary folk conversant with the truths he revealed, and to give them so clear a grasp that they would be able to transmit them faithfully and fully to others. Upon this task he spent unfaltering labour. His instruction of casual multitudes now become infrequent and incidental. He must concentrate on training the twelve he had chosen, in order that through them his message might be perpetuated. And, short

as the time would be, he must use infinite patience. Often enough they seemed exasperatingly dense. But he taught them "as they were able to bear it," enforcing one lesson at a time. So, day after day, the work went on. He taught by word, by question and answer, by parables and explanations of parables. We possess, of course, but a small proportion of the lessons he spoke to the apostles. Their training went on as they walked along the road, or rested by the wayside, or, when the chill night fell, gathered round the fire for their simple meal. We cannot doubt that, like other rabbis, and as they would expect, he made them repeat after him some of his terse and vivid sayings until they had them by heart. They made request for that method when they said "teach us to pray," and, sentence by sentence, they learnt the pattern prayer.

He taught them, as he had taught the crowds, by deed also. For instance, he had spoken often of the duty of service. Not

all his words, perhaps, would they keep faithfully in their memories. But never could they forget the deed which translated precepts into action. Never could they forget that scene when, towards the close of his ministry, he fulfilled for them the duties of a slave, and knelt before them all in turn, and washed their feet. "I have given you an example," he said, "that ye also should do as I have done to you."

Yet, even more than by word or deed, he taught them by his character. He had called the twelve, to quote again St. Mark's words, "that they might be with him and that he might send them forth to preach." To be with him was the first stage. Only by being with him could they learn their message. For that message was ultimately to have as its centre, not ethical or moral counsel, but himself. He was to be the theme they would set before the world. And the whole validity of the new doctrine must depend, as we have seen, upon the belief about him who gave it. Keenly as

he realized this, Jesus would make no effort to force belief about himself on his disciples, either by using his supra-normal powers or by argument. They must win through to the truth for themselves. Only thus, he knew, would their creed have any permanent strength or worth. So he waited; waited with a daily anxiety we may allow ourselves to picture. And at last the superb patience gained its reward. Not because it had been imposed upon them by authority, but because the conviction had grown, almost despite themselves, from within, because the teaching by word, deed, and character had made any other conclusion impossible, incredulous wonder passed into eager surmise, and then surmise was merged in certainty.

Perhaps no day brought Jesus more happiness than this. At last he felt he might venture the question on the reply to which turned all the future of his work. First, "Whom do men say that I am?" he enquired of the twelve, and was told some of the be-

liefs that were current. Then came the tremendous, the decisive moment. "But whom say ye that I am?"

And Simon Peter, spokesman for the twelve, made answer:

"Thou art the Christ; the Son of the living God!"

CHAPTER VI

THE CRISIS

I

ALTHOUGH the Gospels are not complete biographies, they are full enough to show that the ministry of Jesus was divided into well-marked periods, and that there were great turning-points in his life on earth. Perhaps the first was reached on that day of his boyhood when he lingered in the Temple, and resolved, we may believe, that when he grew up he would be a teacher of the Law. Another certainly was the day of his baptism, giving a clear consciousness of his Messiahship. Critical also was that solitary struggle which mastered temptations to misapply his powers. After the training in Jerusalem was finished, a new chapter opened when he returned to his

province of Galilee and began in Capernaum his public work as a rabbi. Then the appointment of the twelve was another definite turning-point. It signified a change of method, the results of which have endured through the centuries. Afterwards events began to shape themselves towards the final crisis. This would be reached when Jesus could feel that his hour was come, and in a way none could disregard, publicly proclaimed himself the promised Messiah.

We shall find that the Gospels gain in fascination and coherence when we notice these main divisions into which the work of Jesus naturally falls, and observe how each stage logically prepares for the next. It is true that in regard to details the Gospels sometimes depart from strict chronological order, bringing together words or deeds that occurred at different periods because they happen to illustrate one special point in the teaching. St. Mark's, however, the earliest of the records, seems mostly to keep to the strict order of time. And whatever ques-

tions there may be whether a particular incident belongs to this or that part of the ministry, the main divisions of the work are beyond reasonable doubt. When we realize them, the pages of the Evangelists grow luminous in a new way. We understand that these writings are not—as perhaps we once supposed—mere "memorabilia," a more or less casual collection of the things which Jesus did and said, but that they set before us a story definitely connected from beginning to end, a story in which each part springs inexorably from what has gone before.

II

For the sake of clearness, let us retrace again the steps that led up to the final crisis.

The aim of Jesus the Messiah—of this Hebrew word "Christ" is, of course, the Greek equivalent—was to establish the kingdom of God among men. To accomplish that was to do his Heavenly Father's will. The kingdom was to be other than popular

opinion expected. It was to be spiritual, not political. It was to be set up by suasion, not force. It would gradually spread its influence, like leaven; it would gradually increase in size, like a grain of mustard-seed. It would change men's hearts, give them a new set of values, and unite them in one another and to God through love. But before it would begin, there must be teaching. The true meaning of the kingdom and the Law must be set forth. And the teaching should enable those who heard aright to discern that the teacher was himself the Messiah. That conviction, with the rest of the truth, must be encouraged to grow from within. If Jesus began by proclaiming himself the Messiah, he would be either derided or misunderstood. Either he would be attacked as another in the series of pretenders, or he would be hailed as the leader of a revolution. To guard against these risks, therefore, they who in early days did discern that Jesus was the Messiah must be charged to keep their knowledge secret. As a necessary prepara-

tion, the people must be taught the real nature of the kingdom and the Law, both of which they had been led to misinterpret. They must be brought into touch with God.

So as a rabbi, as a religious teacher and not as a politician, as one whose business was to interpret the Law and not to overthrow it, Jesus began his work in Capernaum. As we have noted, it was immediately and strikingly successful. From Capernaum Jesus, accompanied by four or five disciples, journeyed to other towns and villages within easy distance. At this stage, most of the teaching was given in the synagogues, where Jesus was welcomed by the authorities as a rabbi whose fame had already become great. At Nazareth there was local jealousy, but nowhere as yet was there official opposition. On the contrary, the right of Jesus to teach as a rabbi was unquestioned. His personality, his charm, the moving force of his words, so new in their message and so powerful in their appeal to conscience, ensured him an eager hearing. At this stage he may

well have hoped to win over the national church to his views, and to convince its leaders that his revelations of God, of the Law, and of the kingdom were true. Then the national church itself would aid in spreading his message. As it did that, it would awaken also to the truth about himself. Thus, at the last, amid the welcomes of a purified and spiritualized Israel, he would enter Jerusalem, the acclaimed and recognized Messiah. There in the Temple the spiritual kingdom would have its visible centre, whence its influence would radiate through the world. The mere temporal authority of Rome would seem unimportant. And there, perhaps, the final disclosure would be made, the divine Messiah would be transfigured and pass in glory out of human sight. . . .

But, if ever there were such hopes, before long they proved vain. Soon it became evident that most of the religious leaders would not be won over by the teaching of Jesus, no matter how the crowds welcomed

it. Official opposition began to show itself, and became increasingly strong. In part it may have been due to jealousy. In part it was stirred by the novel doctrines about the Law which Jesus upheld. The first quarrels were over his doctrine and practice in regard to the sabbath. Afterwards other points of controversy developed. One traditional rule after another—about fasting, about ceremonial washing, about the eating of common food, about incurring defilement in various ways—was set aside by Jesus. The teaching he gave about their unimportance seemed heresy. Soon the breach between him and the national church became complete. He might attract and gain the admiring friendship of a Pharisee here and there. But henceforth the official policy of the religious leaders was to asperse his character, to silence him if possible, and to look for an opportunity of procuring his imprisonment and death. They were thwarted by his immense popularity with the multitudes, and their conspiracy with the Herodians to have

him arrested on a political charge came to nothing. What they could do, however, was to exclude him from the synagogues. In consequence, Jesus could no longer teach as an accepted rabbi. Sometimes he was described as "the prophet from Galilee"; his seemed now more akin to the irregular and unofficial ministry of the older prophets. Yet he was still addressed as "rabbi," and still adapted to his own purpose some of their methods of instruction. So, as he had said, the work of the two great religious forces, the "Law" and "the Prophets," was conjoined in him, and he "fulfilled" them both.

As we have seen, his complete estrangement from the religious leaders of his age, and the personal danger in which he was placed both by their hatred and by the political suspicion of Herod, compelled him to adopt new methods. In order to secure the perpetuation of his message, he appointed the twelve apostles, gave less teaching in public, and concentrated upon training them. May we suppose that he had in mind the

time when the records of his ministry would pass from the spoken to the written form, and that he trained three of the twelve with a special view to this? It seems at least to explain the differences made between Peter, James, and John and the rest. These three only, and no one else, were allowed by him to be present when he raised the daughter of Jairus. These three alone were allowed to witness the Transfiguration. These three alone were with him in Gethsemane. True, James and John were brothers. But Peter's brother, Andrew, was not allowed to be with Jesus and the three at these special times. Perhaps, then, the three were chosen in order that what they had seen might be included in the written Gospels. One of the oldest and most trustworthy Christian traditions affirms that St. Mark derived the material for his Gospel from Peter. By whatever hand the Fourth Gospel was edited, we may still believe that it enshrines the personal memories of John. James was beheaded by Agrippa within fourteen years of

the crucifixion. Yet a recent writer attributes to him much of the information incorporated in the Gospels; arguing, for example, that St. Luke's Gospel contains "large blocks of matter drawn from the tradition of James."[1]

Of course this cannot be put forward as more than a surmise. What is clear, however, is that Jesus admitted these three apostles to a specially intimate companionship, while also he trained all the twelve so that they might understand and preach to others the fulness of his message. For a time he seems to have remained in Galilee with them, chiefly in its southern parts. But one day, when they had gone north again to their headquarters at Capernaum, an incident occurred which may have suggested to Jesus the possibility of extending his work in a new way.

The detachment of troops stationed at Capernaum was commanded by a centurion

[1] *The Three Traditions in the Gospels,* by W. Lockton. (Longmans, 1927.)

of fine character. Though himself a Gentile and a pagan, he had defrayed the cost of building the Jewish synagogue in the town. And when a slave of his had fallen ill, this centurion showed practical sympathy of a kind rare enough in that age among slave-owners. Hearing that the great healer was in the town, he begged for the assistance of Jesus, who said that he would come and heal the slave. But the centurion demurred. This was needless, he said. The famous rabbi would incur technical defilement by entering the house of a Gentile. As a soldier, he knew that commands were obeyed without the personal presence of the authority who issued them. Jesus, he was sure, had authority over invisible powers. Let him but give them his command, and the slave would be healed. As both St. Matthew's and St. Luke's Gospels frankly state, Jesus was astonished by this serene and confident faith. He "marvelled" at it. It was the more striking because he who showed it was a Gentile. Not in Israel, said Jesus,

had he found such faith as this. It may have encouraged him to go, as he did not long afterwards, into the pagan country north of Galilee. He could do much for its inhabitants if they were capable of faith such as this centurion had shown.

But before leaving his own province of Galilee, he would try to send his message to places in it which he himself had been unable to visit. There was much ground still to be covered. So he sent out no fewer than six missions, to work at the same time in different directions. Two by two the twelve went forth. They were to preach repentance, and they were given special power to cast out evil spirits and to heal by anointing with oil—not a method which Jesus himself ever used. They were to take but the least possible equipment, so that they might not be mistaken for persons travelling on business or for pleasure. They would be maintained by the people they visited, but they were not to thrust themselves upon unwilling hosts or hearers; these, with a

solemn warning, they were to leave behind. And for the present they were to limit their work strictly to the Jews. So they went their various ways; we may imagine with what farewells and encouragement from their master.

During their mission in Galilee, Jesus seems to have visited Jerusalem. Then he returned, to meet the twelve at the time and place he had appointed. But now Galilee had become even more dangerous for him than it had been before. The knowledge that six separate missions were wandering through his land and proclaiming the advent of some strange kingdom increased the suspicions of Herod Antipas about Jesus and his followers. Evidently, too, the mission of the twelve would be regarded as a direct challenge by the religious authorities. Much as the Pharisees had resented the doctrine of Jesus, as yet they had not doubted his credentials as a rabbi. But that he should despatch twelve fishermen and peasants—with an ex-publican among them!—to spread his heresies up and

down the country seemed intolerable. Thus Galilee was no longer a province in which Jesus could stay with safety for any length of time.

The place, however, where Jesus had commanded the twelve to rejoin him was in Galilee. Probably it was Capernaum; certainly it was on the Lake. At once the eager apostles began to pour out their reports of "all things, whatsoever they had done, and whatsoever they had taught." But the little group was quickly surrounded by a restless, shifting crowd, insistent with questions, with clamorous welcome, with demands for miracles. The scene is painted vividly by the evangelists. Jesus wished to be alone with the twelve. In that setting, quiet talk with them was impossible. " 'Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place and rest awhile,' " he said. "For there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat." So in "the boat"—the boat always kept ready for their use in case of sudden need for flight—they crossed to the other

side. But the crowd saw them put off, and ran on foot round the northern end of the Lake, and arrived first on the opposite coast. So when Jesus and the apostles beached their boat, instead of the quiet seclusion on which they had counted, they found the very crowd they had thought to have left behind at Capernaum waiting to meet them!

We get a glimpse of the superb equanimity, the undefeated kindness of Jesus, when we note that, so far from being exasperated by the untimely demands of these people, he "had compassion on them, and began to teach them many things." He had spent the morning in trying to hear the reports of the twelve, while having to deal with the continual interruptions and requests of the crowd. There was no leisure for the midday meal. He made the voyage across the Lake, only to find the multitude awaiting him. Hour after hour he endured the further strain of teaching some five thousand people in the open air. When at last "the day was now far spent," he made them

sit in orderly fashion on the grass, and used his supernatural powers to give them food. But the effect of this deed was disastrous. It so stirred the enthusiasm of the people that they tried to seize Jesus in order to make him their king. In haste, lest they too should be infected by the idea, Jesus compelled the twelve to embark again and to cross the seven miles of water, "while he himself sendeth the multitude away." At last he managed to quiet and dismiss them. "And when he had taken leave of them," not even then, as we might suppose, did he rest! No; "he departed into the mountain to pray." At all costs he must have solitary communion with his Father. Yet this again was interrupted. From the height where he prayed he saw—for it was the time of the paschal full moon—his disciples "distressed in rowing, for the wind was contrary." So he comes to them wonderfully across the water and calms the storm. By this time it is "the fourth watch of the night"—3 a.m. When at last they landed

again on the western side of the Lake, "straightway the people knew him," and hurried to fetch their sick folk that they might be healed.

Such were twenty-four hours in the working life of Jesus.

III

But it was clear that the Galilæan ministry was finished. Jesus must hasten to escape out of the territory of Herod Antipas. What had just happened, the assemblage of many thousands and their misguided attempt to make Jesus their king, would impel the Government to take action, and would give them the pretext they needed. Moreover, the animosity of the ecclesiastical authorities in Galilee was stirred afresh by a deputation of Pharisees and Sadducees from Jerusalem. This was presumably a result of the visit recently paid by Jesus to the capital. Its significance only becomes clear when we recollect that Pharisees and Sadducees were rival sects, violently opposed to

one another. That they should now unite in order to attack Jesus was a measure of their hatred against him. Their presence and efforts to entrap him were another reason for quitting Galilee. Finally, Jesus desired, as we have seen, leisure and quiet in order that he might concentrate on his task of instructing the twelve. He could not carry out this purpose among the clamorous throng, or where at any moment he might be arrested by Herod's officers. So he and the twelve were compelled to fly from Galilee. Afterwards they only entered it at intervals for a few days at a time when conditions were favourable, then again retreating across the border before their presence was generally known.

First they went to the far north-west, staying in the coast district near Tyre and Sidon. Here his knowledge of Greek would be of service to Jesus. It enabled him to talk with a Greek-speaking Phœnician woman, whose nimble wit won for her the healing of her daughter. When he travels south

again, he carefully keeps outside the territory of Antipas. For a time he was in Philip's land, in and near Cæsarea Philippi, and then in that strange Hellenic colony of ten cities known as Decapolis. During these months he was willing to use his powers as a healer when eager supplicants asked his help, but he attempted no public teaching by word. He gave his strength to training the twelve. He was preparing himself also for the crisis, and spent much time in solitary prayer. It is curious to notice how powerfully the symbolism of the hills appealed to him. When he had climbed them, he seemed to feel that he had gained a loftier level in more than a physical sense. The remoteness, the silences, the winds and wide views of a hill aided his communion with his Father. Whenever he could, he withdrew from the plains to the heights.

One evening, in these months of travel with the twelve, Jesus came to Hermon; that great mountain in the north country, near the source of the Jordan, snow-

crowned through most of the year, and rising to a height of more than nine thousand feet. Jesus ascended one of its outlying spurs. He took with him Peter, James, and John, those three witnesses to future times. The darkness fell, and while Jesus still prayed, his disciples slept. Then they were roused by a sudden brightness, and with dazzled eyes saw their master standing radiant and transfigured. He was speaking to two strangers, and their converse showed that these were Moses and Elijah. They had revisited the earth to stand, the traditional founders of the Law and the Prophets, beside him who had come to end the ancient animosity between the two forms of religion, and to fulfil them both. Jesus told them of what must befall him in Jerusalem. And Peter, half awake and wholly terrified, stammered incoherent words. A cloud overshadowed them, and there was a Voice which said: "This is My beloved son; hear ye him." When the cloud dispersed, Prophet and Lawgiver had vanished: Jesus remained. He

forbade the three to tell any, even the other apostles, what they had seen, until the time should come when he had died and conquered death. . . .

An amazing story. What are we to make of it? The more we study the simplicity, directness, restraint, and candour with which it is told by each of the first three Gospels, the more assured we may feel that these are records of a genuine experience. To rationalize it as a phantasy or to dismiss it as a fabrication seem alike impossible. Even the frankness with which Peter's bemused babble ("for he knew not what he said") is given confirms its truthfulness. An imagined scene of this kind would have been described very differently. It is the story of a great spiritual experience, and of a real spiritual experience. That we can affirm with confidence, and more than that we need not wish to say. The precise mode of its happening must remain beyond our understanding. Psychological explanations of its source are as unsatisfying as allegorical interpretations

of its meaning. There are moments, and this is one, when we shall be wise if we accept the limitations of human knowledge, and are content to revere.

IV

Yet it is not rash to believe that, as the baptism brought Jesus inspiration for the beginning of his ministry, so the transfiguration gave him added strength as he neared its crisis and its close. And of this, surely, he had need, for how much there was to discourage at this time! Probably between two and three years had passed since he began his work in Galilee. We have noted how its first bright promise of growing success had passed away. And it was of sinister omen that the change had been brought about by outside influence. Even the Pharisees in Galilee had not been openly hostile until they were made so by emissaries from Jerusalem. It was true that Jesus had not lost his hold upon the Galilæan people. Many, no doubt, especially among the upper classes, had been

turned against him by the example of their religious leaders. Others were chagrined by his failure to initiate a political revolution. Yet there were hundreds to whom his touch had brought healing, and more to whom his words had given faith and strength and happiness. As for the great mass of the people, it was true that they misunderstood much of the teaching, and, in particular, failed utterly to understand the nature of the kingdom which Jesus had laboured to set before them clearly. It was true, as he complained, that they sought him often from unworthy motives, as when they came "because they ate of the loaves and were filled." Yet they sought him, with feelings in which curiosity and awe and love all had their part. To the last, when he was known to be in Galilee, they rushed in thousands to welcome him. The efforts of their official religious teachers to keep them away were vain.

Here, then, was abundance of material for further ministry. If as yet but few of these affectionate people had managed to

grasp his real message, they might be taught it in time. If, having trained his apostles and fitted them to co-operate with him, Jesus could hold further missions in Galilee, plainly they would be fruitful of result. But this was just what he could not do. An unholy alliance between the emissaries from Jerusalem and Herod had outlawed him, in effect, from his own province. Now he could but enter its borders for the briefest of secret visits. To recommence preaching there would mean his prompt arrest. We may dare to imagine the bitterness of this disappointment, of finding himself excluded from his own country and its eager people, of having no further chance to win them over to his doctrine of the Kingdom.

Where, then, should he turn? He was safe, and welcomed, in the pagan north. He was safe in Perea, or elsewhere on the east side of the Jordan. But not in these districts was his work to be done. What of Judæa, and Jerusalem itself? It was in Jerusalem, according to those ancient prophecies which

the Jews studied, that the Messiah would declare himself. He would enter the city as king; he would come suddenly to the Temple. Therefore the first effort of every false Christ that had arisen had been to obtain possession of the Temple. But his visits to Jerusalem had shown Jesus all too plainly the temper of its people. He had found no success there, such as had brightened the early months in Galilee. The predominant influence was that of the Sadducees, whose hatred was more malignant that that of the Pharisees and their scribes in Galilee. The Pharisees had a religion, perverted and sterile though it was. The Sadducees were worldly and of sordid mind; not among the Sadducees could Jesus find a Nicodemus. Yet in Jerusalem the Pharisees were willing to combine with their hated rivals in order to destroy Jesus. At a much earlier stage of the ministry, the Fourth Gospel affirms that "Jesus walked in Galilee; for he would not walk to Judæa, because the Jews"—a name this Gospel limits to the inhabitants of Judæa

—"sought to kill him." And in Jerusalem, though some of the multitudes said "he is a good man," "no man spake of him openly, for fear of the Jews."

What was he to do? Galilee was closed to him. For months he had spent his strength in training the twelve, and dense and unreceptive as they had often seemed, there was not much more which, at this stage, he could do for them. How was the kingdom of God to be set up? As we have seen, it was to be a society of mankind linked with God and one another by love; its law the law of service, its charter the Father's benediction. All within it must be docile as little children are, ready to accept its new standard of values, brave to fight evil in themselves and in the world, eager at all costs to tune their wills with the will of God. Such as these would form the Kingdom; such as these would have passed from death into life.

Jesus had planned to work for some years as a rabbi, the better to expound the nature and laws of this spiritual kingdom. He

would show how Law and prophets had prepared for it, when their doctrines were rightly understood. He would work by means of the national church, which in turn would spread his Gospel. From district to district it would spread. From belief in this kingdom would grow belief in himself as the promised king. Then this spiritual kingdom would be formally inaugurated in Jerusalem, and his own divine Messiahship would supersede the lower and mistaken hopes of a political upheaval. From Jerusalem the good news would go forth into all the world, and all the world would be transformed and transfigured into a part of the kingdom of God.

That plan had failed. Was there any other method by which the kingdom could be established? There was one. There was only one. More and more clearly Jesus saw this other way to be inevitable if he was to fulfil his divine mission and accomplish his Father's will. He would make a public entry into Jerusalem, as the Messiah was expected

to do, at the coming Passover. He would assert himself as the Christ. He would exercise his authority in the Temple. And the swift results, beyond question, must be his suffering, and torture, and death. But physical death could not touch his imperishable life. After a short space, sufficient to show that his death, as men count death, was no illusion, his life would again be manifested to those who loved him. And when he was no longer visibly among them, its power would be perpetuated by the divine spirit. Thus his death would succeed where his life had failed. He would die, he would be raised from the dead. So, after all, the kingdom would be inaugurated in Jerusalem. So by degrees it would spread throughout the world. So would Jesus the crucified be revealed as Jesus the Christ.

V

He tried to prepare the twelve for what must befall him. But he tried in vain. By a strange paradox, it was the very faith to

which they had recently won through that now made his words to them incredible. If in the past he had told them that he was to be crucified, they would have been aghast —yet they might have believed it. But now they were sure, as Peter had said that he was the Christ, the son of the living God. And that the promised Messiah should suffer death as a criminal was unthinkable. The idea that God could permit seemed grotesque. How was the promised work of deliverance to be done if the Messiah perished? Their master had said much that was hard to accept, but this went beyond all bounds. They merely dismissed it as incomprehensible. They found it a relief to get back to sane conversation among themselves. Let us talk of practical things, said they. When Jesus has set up his kingdom in Jerusalem, to which of us will he give the most important posts? Again and again he tried to make them understand that he meant what he said, but vainly. He had to lack human sympathy as the great crisis came near.

Yet he began to prepare for the journey towards Jerusalem. He paid, with necessary secrecy, a final visit to Capernaum and the house there which had been his second home. Then he went south. As soon as he had crossed the border into Samaria, he resumed the methods of work which he had laid aside during the months of training the twelve. He began again a public ministry. In St. Mark's words, "multitudes come together unto him again, and, as he was wont, he taught them again." He recruited many new disciples, and despatched no fewer than seventy of them, two and two, as advance messengers to the towns and villages which he himself proposed to visit later. Afterwards he worked in Perea. His own immense burden, his prevision of the final choice he must make never lessened his readiness to heal the sick, to comfort the sorrowful, to help all that came with their multitudinous and often obtuse questions.

Twice in this period he seems, while leaving his disciples elsewhere, to have visited

Jerusalem, and to have taught there. But he found nothing to lift the shadow, nothing to change his tragic certainty of what would befall him when he entered the city as the Messiah. A chance word spoken during one of these visits possibly reveals how deeply the strain of these last few months had set its mark upon Jesus. Challenging a mystic utterance of his, a bystander observed: "Thou art not yet fifty years old." The speaker, who judged from his personal appearance, perhaps guessed him to be forty-five or thereabouts. In fact, Jesus was in his thirty-third year! Yet can we wonder if his face had aged prematurely since the day when he began to see the cross at the end of his road?

VI

Then the crisis came. The final decision had to be made. It was the supreme hour. He must be alone. He had sent the twelve to meet their Galilæan friends and relatives who even now were streaming from the

north towards Jerusalem, where they must keep the Passover. The Galilæans mostly travelled by the eastern road, to avoid passing through Samaria, "for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans." Jesus himself seems to have been somewhere near Jericho at this time, about twenty miles from Jerusalem. The great highway was near him. In which direction should he walk along it? It was not too late to alter his decision. He could go to the north. It led to security. It led to places where he would be welcome. It led to towns and villages where he could continue to teach and heal. Or he could go south. It led to—the cross. We say that word easily now, and even its symbolism is often forgotten. It was different in days when the mere word caused the strongest to shudder, when it stood for every circumstance of torture and humiliation, preluding hours of unimaginable agony.... There was, humanly speaking, no need to take it. Jesus was free. He was under no compulsion, except that of love and the con-

viction, which would not yield, that thus only could the Father's purpose be accomplished and the kingdom of God set up. North and south lay the road. We know nothing of that hour of decision, when the whole future history of man was in the balance. The Gospels are silent concerning it.

But the earliest of them gives us a picture of Jesus as he emerged from the supreme crisis and conflict of the soul. It gives us the picture in simple words which become unforgetable when their significance is realized. The twelve with other pilgrims are coming along the road towards Jerusalem. Suddenly Jesus steps forward from some spot where he had been awaiting them, and places himself at their head. The choice is made. He is walking south—to the cross. But what was this look on his face, what was this new mysterious sense of awe that they felt? Here is the simple record:

"And they were in the way, going up to Jerusalem; and Jesus was going before

them; and they were amazed; and they that followed were afraid."

They could not account for their sudden fear. They did not know what new power in him it was that stirred this amazement. The twelve dared not ask, or walk beside him pouring out their eager words, as was their wont. They were amazed. Alone, with that awe-compelling look upon his face, he went before them. But presently, "he took again the twelve, and began to tell them the things that were to happen unto him."

Let the picture stand. To mar it by comments would be inexcusable.

Yet among the Galilæan pilgrims who followed the apostles a question woke and persisted. It persists still. Was Jesus no more than an amiable ex-carpenter of Nazareth? "The difficulties of belief" is a common phrase. But is there anything in the world so difficult, so impossible, to believe as this?

CHAPTER VII

THE LAST DAYS

I

In describing the three years' ministry of Jesus, St. Mark's Gospel gives no less than a third of its space to the last seven days. No doubt Peter's recollections of that tremendous period would be specially full and vivid, and from Peter's recollections most of the material for this Gospel was derived. Yet even this would hardly account for the great detail with which the events of the last week are set forth. There may be a simple explanation. We have the account of the arrest in the olive orchard named Gethsemane. We are told how all the disciples fled. We are told how the guard led away Jesus to the high priest. But between these sentences suddenly this is interpolated:

"And a certain young man"—a young man, that means, whose name the writer could give if he chose—"followed with him, having a linen cloth cast about him, over his naked body: and they laid hold on him; but he left the linen cloth and fled naked."

Why is the main narrative suddenly broken off in order that we may be told of this incident? By itself, it appears quite pointless. Various attempts have been made to account for its insertion, and one of them seems wholly satisfying. This "certain young man" was the writer of the Gospel himself. Perhaps his house adjoined the orchard.[1] Before dawn he was roused by the sound of voices and the flares of torches. He rose, hastily threw a wrap round him, and dashed out. As he pushed his way towards Jesus, the guards, fearing an attempt

[1] Of which, again, he may have been the owner. It is to be noted that the word translated "linen cloth" means rich and costly linen, such as none but a wealthy man would have had. On the other hand, Mark's mother owned a house *within* the city some fourteen years later (Acts xii. 12).

at rescue, tried to seize him. His wrap remained in their hands as he turned and fled. A happening trivial in itself, but how much it would mean to Mark in later days, when he had learnt to worship Jesus! Although he would not mention himself by name, he could not resist including his own little part in the story of that night. If, too, Mark was in Jerusalem through this week, and was himself a witness of much that happened there, we can understand why he devotes a third or more of his whole work to describing these days. Here he can use, not only Peter's reminiscences, but his own. And therefore these chapters of his have a special historical value. His long account is supplemented by some details obtained by the other evangelists from other sources. In fact, we know far more of the last week than of any other period in the life of Jesus.

The sabbath—that is, the Saturday before what we keep now as Palm Sunday—he spent at Bethany, about two miles from Jerusalem, in the house of friends he loved

—Lazarus, Martha, and Mary. When the sabbath ended, at 6 p.m., he finished his preparations for the morrow. And then, on the first day of the week, he made his solemn entry into the city as the Christ, the Messiah promised to Israel. Every religious Jew had studied the prophecies about the Messiah. There was a passage in Zechariah predicting the manner of his entry into Jerusalem: "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy king cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, even upon a colt the foal of an ass." Therefore when Jesus placed himself among the Galilæans and other strangers who were pouring towards Jerusalem, and rode in their midst seated upon an ass, this was no act of humility. It was a regal challenge. It was a definite assertion, which none could misunderstand, that he claimed to be the Messiah, the Lord God's Christ, the king of Israel.

The Galilæans joyfully recognized that

sign, and did him homage. They strewed the road with palms, they carpeted it with their cloaks. "And they that went before, and they that followed, cried: Hosanna! Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the kingdom that cometh! Hosanna in the highest!" As the procession entered the city, the Pharisees also recognized the sign, and scowled. "Rabbi," they said—so to address him was to deny that higher title which the pæans of the crowd conceded—"Rabbi, rebuke thy disciples." With a solemn pride and joy, that for a moment shone through humility and sorrow, Jesus answered: "I tell you that if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out." And, adds the Matthæan Gospel, when he was come into Jerusalem, all the city was stirred as by an earthquake—such is the literal meaning of the word. "Who is this?" asked the people of Jerusalem. Then, again in accordance with Messianic prophecies, and thus confirming the belief of his

followers, Jesus made his way towards the Temple.

II

And here we may guard ourselves against a misinterpretation of the facts that followed —a misinterpretation curiously common and persistent. It has been popularized by countless sermons. It runs somewhat as follows: —As Jesus rode into Jerusalem, fulfilling the signs of the prophet, the people were sure that he was the Messiah. As such they acclaimed him. Then, when he reached the Temple, they waited confidently for his call to action. He would summon them to rise in God's name, and, aided by His power, to overthrow the rule of Rome. But he said no word of that kind. Their enthusiasm vanished. They were disappointed and dismayed. They felt that they had been duped. Their ardour for Jesus changed into anger against him. His enemies made adroit use of this reaction. The priests and scribes easily induced the people to demand that he

should be put to death. The same voices that had cried "Hosanna!" on Palm Sunday shouted "Crucify!" on Good Friday. And this has become among preachers almost a stock illustration of human fickleness.

Yet, when we examine the Gospels with care, we find that this account is quite at variance with their narratives. In point of fact, while the Jews certainly expected the Messiah to lead them to national independence, they would not anticipate a rising to be begun during the week of the Passover. They would look for a call to arms to be given only when this, the most solemn of their religious festivals, was ended. That is, however, a detail. The main point to be noticed is that the people who did homage to Jesus as the Messiah were quite other than those who clamoured for his death. The former was a Galilæan crowd, composed of pilgrims coming from the north to keep the Passover. The procession began at Bethany, two miles away, and thence escorted Jesus in triumph into the city. The inhabitants of

Jerusalem had no part in the demonstration. They were startled by it, and demanded, "Who is this?" To which the answer was: "This is the prophet, Jesus, from Nazareth in Galilee." We may notice two points in that reply: first that these Galilæans took pride in saying that it was from their province that Jesus came. And, secondly, that, chilled by the scorn of the Jerusalem folk for the provincials, they dared not say "this is the Messiah," though this they believed him to be. They ventured only to describe him as "the prophet."

The other, that which shouted "Crucify!" was a Jerusalem crowd. Probably not a very large one; it would not need a great crowd to throng the forecourt of the Prætorium. The people composing it were dwellers in Jerusalem, accustomed to do the bidding of the powerful Temple rulers. Probably not a few of them were those parasites of whom Jesus had cleansed the Temple a few days earlier. Easily enough would they be per-

suaded to ask for the release of Barabbas rather than of Jesus.

To suppose that the same people shouted "Hosanna!" and "Crucify!" is grossly to slander those loyal Galilæans. They formed a vast multitude, coming as they did from a whole province. They far outnumbered the usual residents in Jerusalem. Instead of being fickle and hastening the death of Jesus, they were a barrier between him and his enemies, through which only an apostle's treachery broke at the last. So far from conniving at his death, day after day their unchanged fidelity kept him alive. St. Luke is at special pains to make this clear. Let us turn to his statements. On the Monday, the enemies of Jesus "could not find what they might do, for all the people hung upon him, listening." On the Tuesday, "the scribes and priests sought to lay hands on him in that very hour, and they feared the people." Again on the Wednesday, "the chief priests and scribes sought how they might put him to

death, for they feared the people."[1] But before Wednesday was over, Iscariot had made his shameful pact. That ended all. In the following night the priests effected their purpose, while those thousands of Galilæns, and those many others whom the words of Jesus had won over since the Sunday, were asleep. Yet the Galilæan loyalty had not been vain. It had prolonged till Friday the life of Jesus, which else had been cut short on Palm Sunday. How much those few days were to mean then and afterwards to the disciples; how rich they were in wonderful deeds and words preserved for every age! Had it not been for the Galilæans, the Gospels must have lacked those pages. We wrong their memory when we misread and pervert clear evidence in order to point a moral, and affirm, which certainly is false, that the lips which said "Hosanna!" were those which said "Crucify!"

Popular talk, again, is apt to wrong the Jewish nation as a whole, by attributing the

[1] St. Luke xix. 47, 48; xx. 19; xxii. 2.

murder of Jesus to national rejection and hatred of him. The evidence of the Gospel narratives shows that his actual enemies were very powerful but very few. As for the general mass of people, their feelings towards him were of every kind—passionate devotion and belief, hesitating wonder, indifference, scepticism, derision. But who were his active opponents? In Galilee, Herod and the officials of his government; also, after a while, the Pharisees and Pharisaic scribes, though their hostility did not become pronounced until it was stirred up by emissaries in Jerusalem. It was here that fierce opposition to Jesus had its centre. The enmity of Herod was mixed with, if not allayed by, sheer curiosity to see the man of whom such strange stories were current. But the religious authorities at Jerusalem longed simply for his destruction. Their reasons are clear. To begin with, we should remember—and the fact has its bearing upon what has been said in the preceding paragraph—that the Jerusalem authorities

had the great contempt for all Galilæans, as uncouth and uncultured provincials. Then we have seen how completely the teaching by word and deed of Jesus had refuted the legalism, with its grotesque idea of "right-eousness," upheld by the Pharisees and their scribes. With them, for the sole purpose of destroying Jesus, their bitter rivals the Sadducees combined. They were a small, wealthy, aristocratic, and most powerful party. To it most of the priests belonged, and it was the prevailing force on the San-hedrin, the great religious council of the nation. In short, it was not the Jewish people as a whole, or even the inhabitants of Jerusalem, that put Jesus to death. This was wholly the deed of the religious authorities, with the help of a Roman official as their most reluctant tool.

III

As the triumphant entry on Palm Sunday had directly challenged and exasperated the

Pharisees, so on the next day Jesus provoked the fierce anger of the Sadducees.

It was a popular expectation, based partly on words of the prophets, that the Messiah would occupy the Temple, and use it as the stronghold from which to direct a campaign against Rome. But this Messiah entered the Temple, not to fortify it as a stronghold, but to purify it as a House of Prayer. The desecration he saw moved him to anger. At this time the "court of the Gentiles" was used as a money-exchange, a market, and a public thoroughfare. Every Jew had to pay a yearly tribute of a half-shekel to the Temple authorities, and the annual total received in this way has been computed at £76,000. The payment had to be made in the special Hebrew coinage. Roman, Persian, Syrian, Egyptian, and Greek money were all in circulation among the Jews. Therefore a few weeks before each Passover the money-changer's tables were set up in the Temple, and their lucrative business began. Even at the statutory rate of

commission, their annual profits have been reckoned at about £9,000. But inevitably they combined usury with their legitimate business. It is easy to picture the scene witnessed under the Temple roof in the days immediately before the Passover, when these Oriental bankers were at the height of their trade—the clink of money-bags, the doubtful weighing of heaps of coins, the clamorous din of bargaining, argument, expostulation over the rate of exchange. Beside this money-changing, and in the same court of the Temple—a court dedicated to prayer!—a live-stock market was in progress. Here farmers chaffered over the price of animals they wished to sell to the Temple dealers. Here customers bought, with the shrill haggling of an Eastern bazaar, the doves they required for ritual offerings. Between the stalls of dealers and money-changers, and through the mob of purchasers, struggled family parties, laden with earthen vessels and other impedimenta. For a custom had grown of using this part of the Temple as a

short cut from the city to the Mount of Olives, where many encamped through the crowded week of Passover.

Upon that scene of tumultuous irreverence suddenly came Jesus. Let what followed be told in the words of an eye-witness:

"He cast out them that sold and them that bought in the Temple, and overthrew the tables of the money-changers, and the seats of them that sold the doves, and he would not suffer that any man should carry a vessel through the Temple."

The restraint of this concise sentence must not blind us to the dramatic intensity and marvel of the event it describes. Here is an episode not to be forgotten when we try to realize the Jesus of the Gospels. As we watch his disciplined fury, we amend that false idea of him as always "meek and gentle." We think of the physical strength shown as the merchants' stalls were overturned, as the money-changers' tables

crashed jingling on the pavement. We think of the moral strength—do not the facts compels us to say the superhuman power?—with which, single-handed, he routed an indignant multitude, driving them shrinking and terrified before him.

It was not this rabble only that his wrath touched. The chief priests knew themselves to be defied and discredited, for it was they who had sanctioned, for their own gain, this misuse of the House of Prayer. We cannot wonder that when "they heard it, they sought to destroy him."

IV

Jesus had spent the Sunday night, like the Saturday, at Bethany, returning to the city on the following morning. But to do that again in the evening meant a two-mile walk along a crowded road, where almost at every step he would be checked and questioned by the curious; where, too, he might be ambushed by his enemies, made doubly fierce by his deeds on Sunday and Monday—the Messianic procession, the cleansing of the

Temple. The fatigue of that walk, with all its risk and strain, after a day of tremendous work was clearly undesirable. Moreover, he wished to be with his disciples, who probably were afraid both for themselves and him. In his earlier visits to Jerusalem he had made some friends, who were indeed disciples—but, like Nicodemus, "secretly, for fear of the Jews." With them he had made arrangements in advance. From one he would borrow the ass upon which he was to ride. Another would lend him a large upper room where he could eat the Passover meal with his disciples. To each of these at the right moment a disciple would come with a pre-arranged sentence, which the lender would recognize.

There was a third friend—reasons for identifying him with St. Mark have already been given—who owned a walled orchard, "Gethsemane,"[1] on the Mount of Olives.

[1] The name means, literally, "oil-press." The Greek word by which St. Mark describes it means "an enclosed plot of ground."

With him Jesus arranged that he and his disciples should have the use of this orchard as their resting-place. Bivouacking would entail no hardship in the warmth of late April, and the Paschal moon was at its full. This was far better than a daily journey to and from Bethany. The orchard was but a short distance outside the walls of the city. Yet it was private property and entirely secluded. Here Jesus could find rest after the tremendous work of his daily public ministry. Here he could be alone with his apostles, and give them the further teaching he desired without fear of interruption. And here he and they could sleep at peace. If his enemies, as was likely enough, tried to catch and arrest him by night in the city—their "fear of the people" made him safe by day—they would not find him. None would know where he had gone. And none did know, until "Judas, one of the twelve," sold the secret.

So the last three days of public ministry began. In these last days, as in the first at Capernaum long before, Jesus came before

the people as an accredited rabbi. Even then, he would not force upon them his Messianic claims. On the Sunday and Monday his actions had made them unmistakably plain. It was for the people to accept or reject them. Now he would teach. At the time of the great religious feasts, the rabbis sat in the shade of the great cloisters enclosing the outer court of the Temple, and there held instruction-classes. The people gathered round whatever rabbi they preferred, asking questions, and listening to his exposition of the Law. To that work, then, Jesus now gave himself. Early each morning he came down from the slope of the Mount of Olives, crossed the ravine at its foot, entered the Temple, took his accustomed seat in the cloisters, and there taught, hour after hour. When at evening the hour came for the Temple to be closed and the last of the listeners reluctantly to leave, he went again to Gethsemane, instructed his apostles, looked with them over the valley towards Jerusalem and wept over it, and then prayed and rested

until the dawn. St. Mark gives us the picture: "Every day he was teaching in the Temple; and every night he went out, and lodged in the mount that is called the Mount of Olives. And all the people came early in the morning to him in the Temple, to hear him."

His enemies, afraid to use force, proposed to themselves another plan. If they could not at once destroy him, perhaps they could discredit him. Emissaries of theirs should join the crowd gathered about him, and in the guise of learners, should ask carefully-prepared questions—questions which, as it seemed, he could neither dare to answer nor evade answering.

But there was no pretence of courtesy in the first question. It came from the chief priests and scribes, and was a blunt challenge of his right to teach. "You sit here," they said in effect, "as a duly-authorized rabbi. Indeed, from the first you have taught, in synagogues and elsewhere, as 'one having authority,' as an authorized teacher

of the Law. But where are your credentials? By what kind"—that is the precise force of the word used—"of authority?" Jesus replied with a counter-question. What would they say of John's ministry of baptism? Was John's "authority" for undertaking it derived from the Sanhedrin or any human source? Or did a commission from God himself make human credentials needless?

"And they reasoned within themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven: he will say, Why did ye not believe him? But if we shall say, From men; all the people will stone us, for they be persuaded that John was a prophet. And they answered that they knew not whence it was. And Jesus said unto them, Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things."

Next came Pharisees and Herodians, with every appearance of deference. "Rabbi," they began ("observe, we are not like those unmannerly priests, questioning thy right to this title!")—"Rabbi, we know that thou

art true, and teachest the way of God in truth"—and then followed the question about "giving"—such was the word they used—the tribute to Rome. The answer, "Yes," they reckoned, must mean popular disfavour; he could not be thought the Messiah who acquiesced in Roman rule; the answer "No" would be treason, with the news of which they would hasten to Pilate. But the unexpected reply of Jesus discomfited them. Here was no question of "giving," but of paying what was lawfully due. "Fetch me a denarius," he said. St. Mark supplies us the word used; St. Matthew and St. Luke, missing its point, substitute "show." It had to be brought from outside; there were no Roman coins within the Temple now that the money-changers had been expelled! And when he had bidden them observe whose were "the image and superscription" on it, he said: "Pay to Cæsar what belongs to Cæsar; pay to God what belongs to God." His questioners "could not take hold of the saying"; they were reduced to sullen silence.

Lastly, the Sadducees took their turn. It would be a triumph to discomfit Jesus. It would be a triumph to succeed where their rivals the Pharisees had failed. And it would be a special triumph if they could succeed by means of a question deriding belief in a future life—a doctrine the Pharisees held, and Sadducees rejected. But for the purpose they had nothing better than an ancient conundrum to propound, the futility of which Jesus quickly exposed. "Rabbi, thou hast well said!" cried a Pharisaic scribe, unable to hide his pleasure at the rout of the Sadducees. And from that time no man durst ask Jesus any more dishonest questions.

Thereafter he was free to teach those who were eager to learn. In answer to a lawyer, he reaffirmed his supreme commandment of love. He denounced the insincerity of Pharisees and scribes with pitiless invective. He instructed the people by wonderful parables. He spoke of his own fate, and of the doom which should befall Jerusalem; a theme to which he returned when he was alone with

the twelve on the Mount of Olives. With this were mingled solemn visions of an ultimate world-judment, clothed in imagery which he took over and adapted from the apocalyptic writings.

V

So day by day Jesus the teacher continued his work, resolute to use to the utmost whatever time remained for him. His foes complained bitterly that "the whole world is gone after him." And as his influence upon the people increased, so did the jealous rage of his enemies. On the Wednesday they held an informal meeting at the high priest's house, to consider how they might effect his capture and destruction. But reluctantly they agreed that their vengeance must wait until after the Passover, when the Galilæans had returned to their own province. "Not during the feast," they said, "lest haply there shall be a tumult of the people." Their words (recorded by St. Mark) again refute any idea that the multi-

tude's devotion to Jesus ended with Palm Sunday.

Perhaps the gathering in Caiaphas's house had just agreed with reluctance upon the policy of delay, and was about to break up, when Iscariot, having learnt of the meeting and guessed its purpose, came to make his proposal. Awful and unutterably base though it was, the priests rejoiced at this easy and unexpected means of accomplishing their purpose. Readily they promised the traitor his wages. The bargain was concluded. Who can say what led Judas to his downfall? Greed of money, the disappointed ambition of one who had counted on high office in an early kingdom, anger at the rebuke given when he complained of the "wasted" ointment—each of these may have had a part, or there may have been quite other causes, of which we know nothing. Attempts have been made to minimize the guilt of Judas. It has been supposed, for instance, that he wished merely to force Jesus into showing his divine power. By means of it he

must repel any attack by the priest's officers, and thus all would be convinced beyond doubt that he was the Messiah. But, however ingenious they may seem, attempts to exculpate Judas fail when we recall the words spoken of him by his master. Jesus showed himself wonderfully kind and lenient to his disciples. He forgave their cowardice, their broken promises, their desertion of him in the hour of danger. When therefore he says:

"The Son of man goeth, even as it is written of him, but woe unto that man through whom the Son of man is betrayed! Good were it for that man if he had not been born"—

we are sure that it was not of a merely ill-judged but well-meant deed that these awful words were spoken.

Having slunk away from the house of Caiaphas, Iscariot rejoined the apostles. As yet they had no thought of his guilt. But Jesus knew it as soon as he saw the traitor's

face, for Jesus could read men's hearts. Yet Judas took his place with the other eleven. On the following evening, when Jesus disclosed his knowledge that one whom he had chosen for close friend should betray him, the voice of Judas was heard with the others in protest, and "Is it I?" he said. What dramatist could have devised that scene? Or who could portray the look that passed when Jesus in the guise of a slave, passing from one apostle to another, presently knelt before Judas and washed his feet?

On the earlier days of the week Jesus and the twelve doubtless had eaten their evening meal in Gethsemane after their return from the Temple. But on the Thursday they were to eat the more elaborate Passover supper, with its careful ceremonial, which could scarcely be done out-of-doors. Therefore they met in the large room which Jesus had arranged to borrow from a friend in Jerusalem. That friend and his family took their Paschal meal in another room, for Jesus would have none but the twelve

with him. He had yet many things to say to them, and he knew that his death was near. He foresaw the utter despair that this would bring to his friends. Therefore, with astounding self-forgetfulness, he spent himself in preparing them for what was to come. More fully than ever he revealed himself to them, he tried to give them peace of mind, and strength, and faith, and a joy no outward disaster could take away. Once only did he reveal in the upper room his own inward agony and suspense as he thought of what was to come, when "That thou doest, do quickly!" he said to the traitor. And Judas rose from his place, and went out to seek the chief priests.

If only by his death, as he was sure, could the Kingdom of God be established, Jesus would meet torture and death with an unmatched fortitude. Yet, though his enemies might do their worst, one thing he could not endure, and that was to be forgotten by his friends. Therefore on this evening he bequeathed to them a rite by

which those who loved him, then and after, should be united with one another and with him. The doctrines concerning it over which men differ are not to be discussed here. Enough to emphasize a truth concerning which all can agree. Whatever the richness of the gifts it bestows, it is not for our own sakes chiefly that we celebrate this rite. The ultimate reason is that by so doing we fulfil the bidding given in the upper room, and still, in every variety of setting, the bread is broken and the wine is poured because Jesus said "Do this in remembrance of me."

When all was finished, and the psalms appointed to end the Paschal meal had been sung, Jesus and the eleven left Jerusalem and made their way towards Gethsemane. As they walked, he told the disciples, amid their indignant protests, that soon they would repudiate him and think only of their own safety. Perhaps the tranquil certainty with which he said this hurt them more than any rebuke could have done, as afterwards

their remorse must have been greater because he had said no word of blame.

They entered the orchard. Eight of the disciples lay down to sleep at their accustomed place. Peter, James, and John went further with Jesus, because he asked them to keep watch while he prayed. He knew that Iscariot had gone to the priests and would lead them to Gethsemane. He wished to be warned of their approach, not that he might fly—had he sought escape, he would not have gone to the usual place, where the traitor would rely upon finding him—but rather that he might end his prayers and advance to meet them.

Then Jesus bowed himself to the ground in an agony of soul. "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass away from me!" Jesus had revealed God as the Father of all men, yet made it plain that he held his own filial relationship to be essentially different from any to which even the disciples could attain. He assumed always as an evident fact that he was "the Son" in a

unique sense. We have no true portrait of him if we omit that. "All things," he said, "have been delivered unto me of my Father: and no one knoweth the Son, save the Father; neither doth any know the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal Him."[1] The whole purpose of his life was to accomplish the Father's will, and that will was the setting up on earth of the Kingdom of God. Of late he had become certain that his dying was the only way by which this could be brought about, and thus the Father's will done. But was there any other way, he asked again, as the awful horror of it closed in upon him? He prayed that, if so, it might be revealed. Yet always, and before all else, he prayed that he might do the Father's will.

As they listened, the three disciples, spent with fatigue and emotion, fell asleep. Presently he roused them, but had scarcely turned

[1] It may be noted that it is not from the Fourth Gospel, but from two of the Synoptists that we have these words.

to pray again before their eyes closed. This happened once more. Then, he said, they might sleep if they could. The hour when vigilance might have served him was past. The betrayer was within the gate. Together let them meet him. Judas advanced, with the priests, their allies, and a contingent of the Temple guard behind. The arranged signal was given. It was the custom for a pupil to salute a rabbi by a ceremonial kiss. Iscariot came to Jesus, and said, "Hail, rabbi!" and kissed him.

"My teacher!" On that word Jesus was led to death. When next would he hear it? Again in a garden, but at dawn, not at night, from lips not treacherous but passionately loyal, from an amazed, adoring woman who too would cry "My teacher!" as she knew him.

VI

There can be no need to re-tell at length the story of the trials and crucifixion. It is set out in the Gospels with a simplicity,

directness, and restraint upon which not the finest of literary craftsmen could improve. There are few points in it needing explanation. But we shall follow the sequence of events more readily if we bear in mind that there were two trials, ecclesiastical and civil, in each of which there were three stages. First, immediately after his arrest, Jesus was taken to the house of Annas, a former high-priest who had been deposed by the intervention of the Roman government. There followed his arraignment before the "council," or Sanhedrin, under the presidency of the high-priest, Caiaphas. He was charged with having spoken blasphemy. Yet those who combined the parts of judges and accusers found a difficulty in obtaining any evidence. Their witnesses could not even fabricate a colourable and consistent story. But at last, in reply to Caiaphas, Jesus unhesitatingly claimed to be the divine Messiah. Thereupon, as tradition enjoined when blasphemy had been spoken, the high-priest "rent his clothes." There was no further

need to trouble about witnesses, he said. They themselves had heard the prisoner blaspheme; what was their verdict? It was that he deserved death.

The third and final stage of the ecclesiastical trial had perforce to be delayed for an hour or two. According to the Law, these proceedings had been irregular, as the Sanhedrin could not hold a formal meeting except between dawn and sunset. Until the day broke, therefore, Jesus was exposed to the savagery of the mob. Then, in a few minutes, the formal session began and ended. The capital sentence was passed.

But the power of carrying it out had been taken from the Jewish authorities by the Romans. Therefore a civil trial had to follow, and Jesus was hurried off to the procurator. Here two new counts were added to the indictment. Pilate viewed the Jews and their religion with contempt. He would not easily be persuaded to reckon "blasphemy" as a crime justifying sentence of death. But "stirring up the people" and

"forbidding to give tribute to Cæsar," of which also Jesus now stood accused, were in a very different category. Pilate knew, and the Jews knew that he knew, how short would be that procurator's tenure of office who spared any prisoner guilty of stirring disaffection against Rome.

Despite this knowledge, Pilate tried again and again to release Jesus. When he had interrogated the prisoner privately, he was wholly sure that the charges brought against him were due to mere malevolence. But the enemies of Jesus had filled the Prætorium with their hirelings. Pilate's sojourn in Palestine had not taught him much of a frenzied Oriental mob if he supposed that he could divert it from its prey by an appeal to justice or compassion. Then, after the first stage of the trial, Pilate, wishing to evade responsibility, sent this Galilæan prisoner to the tetrarch of Galilee, who was in Jerusalem for the Passover. Herod Antipas took this as a welcome compliment. But all his questions to the prisoner were

met with an impenetrable silence, and Jesus, after being mocked and maltreated by Herod's troops, was sent back under escort to Pilate.

Once more that unhappy procurator tired to escape from what he knew would be at least a sacrifice of Roman justice to a corrupt and bloodthirsty mob. He would have tried yet more had not the fiendish ingenuity of their instigators put into the mouths of the people the one argument that could break Pilate's resistance. "If thou let this man go, thou art not Cæsar's friend!" "Shall I crucify your king?" "We have no king but Cæsar!" Let him ignore that cry, and Pilate's own days were numbered. That the chief priests and their accomplices had suborned the very dregs of the city to achieve their end is made certain by those words to Pilate. To any patriotic and religious-minded Jew the idea that some of his fellow-countrymen, standing in Jerusalem itself, gathered at the very time of the Passover, should declare "We have no king but

Cæsar!" would have seemed revolting and incredible.

So the third and last stage of the trial ended. Pilate, who had tried to shift his responsibility to Herod, tried now to shift it to the crowd. Solemnly he washed his hands before them all. But it was he and no other who handed over Jesus to be crucified. Only when, presuming on their triumph, the high-priests bade him alter the inscription he had set upon the cross, did the true quality of his race re-assert itself. "What I have written, I have written," he answered, and in that curt reply rings the spirit of imperial Rome.

VII

There are some of us who cannot bear to dwell as certain writers have brought themselves to do, upon all the horrible barbarities and indignities which Jesus had to suffer. Enough to remember that, in a sense, the very cruelty of his torturers overreached itself. As a rule, the victims of

crucifixion lingered in agony for two or three days. But to Jesus, worn out already by exhaustion, and buffeting, and scourging, release came within some five hours—a space so unusually short that the soldiers wondered to find him already dead.

As he hung on the cross, Jesus the teacher still taught, alike by his words and his silence. In his recorded words are a profound revelation of himself, for he prayed for his murderers, comforted a penitent thief, provided for his mother and a disciple, or ever he said a word of his own suffering of soul and body. He taught by his silence also, for there was not a word of bitterness or reproach, and not one of regret for things done wrong or opportunities misused. He alone had no cause for sorrow as he looked back over his life; he alone could feel that he had left nothing undone, and could say of his every task, "It is finished!"

When the moment came for Jesus to die, his last word, a sentence from a psalm, was so spoken that it gained for him a convert.

Some power more than human seemed to reinforce him. For it was not in the faint whisper of the dying, but "with a loud voice" that he cried: "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit!" Near him stood a Roman officer, in charge of the soldiers guarding the place of execution. Through the hours he must have watched and listened with increasing wonder. And now, "when the centurion, which stood by over against him, saw that he so gave up the ghost, he said, Truly this man was the Son of God!"

Dare any say that he was wrong?

CHAPTER VIII

THE END—AND THE BEGINNING

I

CHRISTIANITY, which means belief in Jesus as the divine Christ, the Son of God, died on Good Friday.

These pages have attempted to show the setting in which Jesus lived on earth, the successive stages of his ministry, and the varying opinions formed of him by his contemporaries. We have noted that the disciples when they joined him certainly did not regard him as more than an attractive rabbi. They did not become disciples because they believed him divine; gradually they came to believe him divine because they had become disciples. In other words, their belief was the result of their daily

experience. As they listened to his words and lived in his company, they realized quickly that this rabbi was unlike any other rabbi. By degrees that conviction deepened into another—that this man stood apart from all other men. To that in turn succeeded what was at first a wild surmise, then a possibility, and then a certainty—"Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God!" Yet this newly-kindled faith flickered when Jesus spoke of his approaching death. It leapt up again on Palm Sunday. Then on Good Friday it died. All they had heard about a "rising again" seemed meaningless. Hope and faith were buried in the tomb. Only love and bitter sorrow remained. Christianity was dead.

Then something happened which caused it to rise from the dead. Something happened which was to transform men and women, which changed all existence for them, which gave them, after a few days of amazed and incredulous joy, a serene and enduring certainty. This new faith was not

one of transient emotion; not one, again, to be limited to even a few millions of a single race. Beginning among the Jews of Palestine, it was to spread and conquer Europe. When the Roman Empire fell, Christianity did not fall with it. After nineteen centuries, it is still a supreme force in the world.

Christianity, which died on Good Friday, rose again from the dead. That is indisputable. Something must have happened to cause this. That also is beyond question. What was that something?

The New Testament offers an answer. It explains the resurrection of Christianity by affirming the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. That is an adequate cause. If we reject it, we must find some other adequate cause to replace it. Where can we find one? That these Galilæan peasants had either the power or the will to devise a colossal fraud, and endured martyrdom in order to maintain it, is inconceivable. Impostors neither live as the followers of Jesus Christ lived nor die as they died. That they were the

victims of an illusion becomes almost as incredible, when we examine the evidence. The Gospels do not show us men confident that Jesus will rise again on the third day, and eagerly expecting his return. They show us men absolutely sure that they will never see their vanished master again in this world. They show us men who, on receiving the first news of the Resurrection, dismiss it impatiently as an idle tale. They show us men yielding to the evidence of facts slowly and—from fear lest they should be mistaken—reluctantly.

Are we to suppose that the Resurrection story was a pious legend, the accretion of a later age, which found its way into the creed of the Church? Unhappily for such a theory, the Church itself was based upon absolute certainty of the Resurrection. Instead of returning dejectedly to their homes, the disciples remained together in Jerusalem because their risen master had so bidden them, and because their immediate work was to bear witness of his resurrection

to the world. Moreover, legends are of slow growth. They are not universally accepted within the lifetime of those who can contradict them. Here, again, the historical evidence is decisive. We turn to St. Paul's first Corinthian letter. It was written twenty-six years only after the Crucifixion. St. Paul insists that belief in the Resurrection of man —concerning which some of his friends at Corinth were doubtful—must follow upon belief in the Resurrection of Jesus, which none of them doubted. He himself has tested the evidence again, has made a list of those occasions when the risen Lord appeared. Among them he mentions an appearance to "about five hundred brethren at once," the greater part of whom, he adds, are still alive. Five hundred men at once could scarcely be deceived by an illusion. Also it is obvious that St. Paul knows many of the survivors who claimed to have seen the risen Jesus, and has questioned them and compared their accounts.

II

Many devout persons, while firmly holding as truth that Jesus rose from death, have tried to make the Resurrection easier to believe by a "spiritualized" interpretation. They would say that the body did not rise, but that Jesus manifested himself in some psychical way to the consciousness of his disciples, so that they might be sure of his having triumphed over death. Such theories have been given many different forms, each of which is apt to raise difficulties more serious than those it is designed to remove. But two things may be said of them all. The first is that, whatever their intrinsic probability or improbability, they do not represent what the disciples believed, what St. Paul believed, or what the early Church believed. Of course this is not conclusive in itself; the disciples and the five hundred brethren may have been mistaken. Yet, beyond any question, what they believed, and the Church

through them, was that on the third day the spirit of Jesus returned to the body in the tomb, that his resurrected body, transfigured and endowed with new supernatural powers as it was, was one with that body which had hung on the cross and been wounded by nails and spear. And thus he came forth from the tomb and made himself known when he would to his friends.

The other point to be observed in attempts to explain away the bodily Resurrection of Jesus is that they spring from a fixed dislike of the supernatural, and a conviction that the Gospels will be more widely credited in proportion as the supernatural element can be eliminated from their narratives. Yet in a Christian that seems to betray confused thinking. "Whom say ye that I am?" We must return, after all, to that fundamental question. Jesus claimed to be the divine Son of God. We have seen how that claim is inherent in all his teaching. We have seen that his question cannot be evaded by a pretence of distinguishing

between the teaching and the claims of him who gave it. If those claims were untrue, then he was either a deluded fanatic, suffering from an arrogance and egotism akin to mania, or an impostor. If he is not worthy of our worship, he is not worthy of our love. Studying again the story of his life, the perfect character set forth in the Gospels, the teaching given by word, and deed, and character, we feel that Jesus is what he claimed to be. But when we admit that, when we accept Jesus as the Son of God, difficulties about the "supernatural" are at an end. They have no longer the slightest cogency. For him, indeed, the supernatural is natural. Because Jesus was the Son of God, we should expect him to rise from the dead. Because he was the Son of God, we should expect the manner of his rising to transcend human experience. We should have far more reason to be sceptical if it did not.

The same considerations will apply to the story of the Virgin Birth. Of set purpose, nothing was said of that in the first pages

of this book, because our view of it will depend far less upon its place in Christian literature and tradition than upon our answer to "Whom say ye that I am?" when we have completed our study of his life and character. Of course the two events do not stand on the same plane of importance, and the historical evidence for the Resurrection is far stronger than that for the Virgin Birth. Yet it is from the other point of view that we best approach the question. Were the claims of Jesus false? Then the Virgin Birth goes, with the Resurrection and all else. Were they true? Then the birth of the Son of God was itself the supreme miracle, apart altogether from its manner. And that the Son of God should be born otherwise than merely human beings is not strange; the supernatural, once more, seems natural.

III

We return to the stories of the Resurrection. There are inconsistencies of detail between them, and they would be less cred-

ible if there were none. For these are no fabrications, carefully planned to harmonize and confirm one another at every point. These are memories of actual things seen and heard in a time of extreme bewilderment and emotion. How easily the memory may slip on points of detail under such a strain is well known. We need go back no further than to accounts of the Great War for instances. When different people describe a battle of no more than ten years ago, they are likely enough to be at variance about the position of a unit, the hour when a message was received or an advance ordered, even though each writes from experience and each is convinced of his accuracy. Who can wonder that there are discrepancies over time and place in the various records of the Resurrection?

They do not matter. What does matter is the convincing truthfulness of the stories as a whole. They are told so artlessly, yet with little touches of human nature that no deviser of imagined tales could have supplied.

What writer inventing appearances of the Lord rising triumphant from the grave would have made him show himself first, not to a worshipping crowd, not to his apostles, but to Mary Magdalene? Or let any read with an alert literary sense the one story of an appearance which is told at any length by the synoptists—St. Luke's account of the journey to Emmaus. Assuredly he will feel that every syllable of it rings true. He will note how graphic and true to life it is, even in its incidental touches: Cleophas's comment, blunt almost to discourtesy, "Surely you must be the only man in Jerusalem, even among its temporary residents, who has not heard of what has happened there in these last few days!" Or, again, the frank despair of "We hoped that it was he which should redeem Israel"—"we hoped, but we have had to abandon that hope." Through this, as through all the Resurrection stories, we are made to feel the perfect serenity, the forgiving love, that now flow from the risen Jesus to his friends.

Then the day came when his visible presence must be withdrawn. Again, why should we doubt the simple record of its manner? Jesus was not come to teach his disciples physics or astronomy. He chose a way that would make it easy for these children to know that he had left the world and gone unto the Father. His last words were a benediction, and, while he still blessed, a cloud received him out of their sight.

And they, who lately had fled headlong from Gethsemane at the first sign of danger, now returned to Jerusalem, the one place of extreme peril for them, "with great joy."

IV

It was an end. But it was also a beginning. When St. Luke prefaced the Acts, he referred to his earlier Gospel as a record of what "Jesus began both to do and to teach." The word is just. The work begun in those three years was to be continued through every age, and in each the promise of his unseen Presence is fulfilled.

The final worth of the Gospels is to put before us not the mere biography of a departed saint, but the portrait of a living Person.

"Whom say ye that I am?" Each of us must make his answer. We are free, if we will, to deny his claims, to reject his appeal for our love. Yet we might well prefer to be mistaken with St. John than to be right with Herod and Iscariot—if the claims were false.

But they are not false. The Jesus who lived and died is the Jesus who lives; the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever.

THE END

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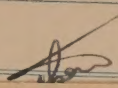
Deane, A.C.
Jesus Christ



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